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["AND PRAY WHAT MAY YOU BE DOING HERE?" EXCLAIMED THE HARSH VOICE OF KEZIAH HEPBURN.]

## HILDA'S FORTUNES.

### CHAPTER XXI.

HILDA and Evelyn were sitting together, in the boudoir of the former, the morning after that very eventful ball. Both had some fancy work in their hands, but the thoughts of neither were upon it, for Evelyn was gazing out of the window with a fixed stare, while Hilda's eyes rested on a little pot of violets at her side, which—to judge from the happy smile that curved her lips—suggested very pleasant memories.

This was, indeed, the case. That one passionate glance of Verrall's had told her he loved her, and at the same moment revealed to her her own secret. She knew at once that the hero, of whom she had dreamt, and over whose advent she had woven the golden tissues of youth and imagination, had really come, and that it remained for her to crown him as her king.

It is impossible to describe the state of extreme happiness into which she was thrown.

Her life had hitherto been so devoid of love—nay, was so still; for in the midst of all the gilded splendours of her surroundings she had found no real affection, and the thoughts of Verrall's heart being her own gave her the most exquisite bliss she had ever felt.

She was quite aware that "the world" would condemn her, as it expected her to make a brilliant match, but for this she cared nothing at all. What were all the riches of India in comparison with a good man's love? For her part, she would have infinitely preferred the utmost poverty, shared with him, than the lonely grandeur of her present position.

Ever since that evening—Christmas Eve—her life had passed in a sort of dream of happy exaltation. She had not spoken to Verrall since, although she had seen him in the distance, but she confidently looked forward to their next meeting, when they might surely come to some explanation.

She knew, or thought she knew, his character well enough to be aware that her wealth would be a barrier in the way of their union, for he was the last man in the world to seek a wife on account of her money; but

surely, if he saw that his love was returned, he would rather risk being called a "fortune-hunter" than risk her happiness.

Yes, she would as plainly as was compatible with her maidenly dignity let him see that she cared for him, and then—. Hilda did not go any further, for her head drooped on her bosom, and a tide of crimson suffused her fair face. She picked a few of the violets, and put them in her dress, first of all raising them to her lips.

"What a sudden affection you have conceived for violets!" exclaimed Evelyn, who had observed the action. "Does it mean anything?"

"What should it mean, except that they are the sweetest of flowers?" demanded her cousin, gaily.

Evelyn was not quite satisfied with the reply. Ever since Christmas Eve she had noticed a certain change in the young heiresses demeanour, and she now felt quite sure that her former suspicions were true, and that Hilda loved Verrall. Suppose he should become aware of it! Would he be able

to withstand the temptation of becoming lord of the Castle and all its broad lands?

Evelyn shivered a little, for she thought she knew human nature, and it seemed to her no man could be expected to conquer such a temptation. She must prevent the officer from ever suspecting that her cousin cherished feelings warmer than friendship towards him, and the best way of doing this would be to tell Hilda of what had happened last night.

"You haven't asked me anything about the ball?" she said, abruptly.

"I was waiting for you to tell me!" responded the younger girl, going on with her work. "You know I am much interested in it. You have already said you enjoyed yourself."

"I did—more than I ever enjoyed myself in all my life!" drawing a deep breath of delight.

Hilda raised her eyes in some astonishment.

"That is saying a good deal, isn't it?"

"Perhaps so, but it is true, nevertheless."

"I suppose you danced all the evening?"

"I danced a good deal, but it was not that which made me so happy. Captain Verrall—she bent her head as she spoke his name—"was there."

"What of that?" queried Hilda, very coldly, while an icy chill fell upon her heart, and the hand that held her work trembled.

"Why—everything! Haven't you guessed my secret—our secret yet, Hilda? Don't you know that we love each other?"

The fire, the chairs and tables, the pictures and statues, all swam before Hilda's eyes in a misty, phantom-like, crowd, and a strange coldness ran through her veins. But she did not lose her self-possession, although her face grew as white as the narcissus at her side.

"You love each other?" she echoed, in the mechanical tone of one who repeats a lesson by rote. "No, I did not know it—how should I?"

"Don't you congratulate me?" whispered Evelyn, slipping on her knees by her cousin's side, and resting her arms in her lap. "Oh! Hilda—he told me last night that he cared for me, and though I knew we shall have to wait for years before we can marry, I am so very, very happy!"

Hilda, thinking afterwards over the moments that followed, wondered how it was she did not faint, or scream, or do something indicative of the torture she was suffering. All in a moment the beautiful love-dream that had been built up of sweet girlish fancies and rose-coloured hopes, lay at her feet in a heap of ugly, shattered ruins, while the grim reality of the fact that she had deceived herself stared her in the face. That glance of Eric's, that she fancied had meant love meant only friendship, and she was the victim of the cruellest self-delusion that any girl had ever suffered!

It was Evelyn he loved, not herself—Evelyn, whose brilliant eyes and clever tongue had won him the very first night they met, and to whom he had confessed his affection.

To Hilda the world seemed to have undergone a change—all was dim, grey and cold, and she herself a shadow, dimmer, greyer, colder than all. If she could have wrung her hands, or wept—if her sorrow could only have found expression it would not have been quite so hard to bear; but she had to control it, and keep herself cold and self-possessed, so that Evelyn might not guess the sad, the shameful truth.

No one ever passed through deeper or bitter waters of humiliation than did the heiress of the Castle at that moment.

"Why don't you speak to me?" demanded Evelyn, breaking the silence. "Do you not rejoice with me in my new-found happiness?"

"I hope—I hope with all my heart that you may be very happy," murmured her cousin, and to herself her voice sounded strange and far off, like that of another person.

She could not say more—she could not have

uttered Verrall's name had her life depended on it.

"Remember," went on Evelyn, "I am telling you this in confidence, and you must not let anyone guess I have told you—not even Eric himself, for we have decided to keep it a secret until he returns from India. I could not keep it from you—you who have been so kind and good to me, and but for whom I should never have seen Eric."

"Eric!"—each repetition of the name seemed to stab Hilda's heart, as it fell so glibly from her cousin's lips. Thank Heaven, no one knew she had ever cared for him! It must be the business of her life to prevent their knowing!

"Now do you understand why I said I enjoyed myself more last night than I ever did in my life before?" pursued the elder girl; and as Hilda did not answer she went on talking of Eric as if she would never grow weary of the theme.

At last the heiress rose.

"I think I have a little headache," she said, her voice trembling very slightly; "I must go and bathe it with Cologne water, and take a spoonful of sal volatile, and then I daresay I shall be all right."

"Let me come and bathe it for you!" exclaimed Evelyn, jumping up, but her cousin declined the offer, and disappeared inside her dressing-room, which, as has before been said, adjoined the boudoir.

Left to herself Evelyn's expression suddenly changed—became dark and anxious.

"Suppose he should find out she cares for him!" she muttered to herself. "Would he leave me for her, wonder?"

Her estimate of human nature at its best was not a very good one, and she was not inclined to endow Verrall with a higher standard of virtue than she herself possessed. Such risks as Hilda's were not to be passed over lightly.

"I could not trust him, no man would stand such a test!" she went on, standing at the window, and gazing out of the park with moody eyes. "The only thing I can do is to prevent their meeting, and that I think I may be able to manage if I am careful, and always keep near Hilda. He will start for India soon and will certainly not come back yet awhile. Who knows what changes may take place in his absence!"

She calmed herself with this idea, but for all that she did not feel quite satisfied—something was lacking in even her joy at fancying herself beloved by Verrall.

Hilda appeared in her usual place at luncheon, and although she was rather pale, and her eyes looked heavy, these signs were easily attributable to a headache.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Evelyn, spitefully. "What a very convenient thing a headache is! I really don't know what the feminine sex, generally, would do without such an institution, for it is like charity, in that it covers a multitude of sins. I mean no reflection on you, Hilda dear, for I am quite sure you are too honest and truthful to make use of a subterfuge, but the thought struck me."

"Then it struck you at a most inopportune moment," put in Mrs. Parker, the lady who was supposed to chaperone Hilda, and with whom the heiress was a great favourite, while Evelyn had earned her bitter animosity.

Evelyn slightly raised her eyebrows with a contempt she made no effort to conceal, but did not take any further notice of the remark, and Hilda was too spiritless to attempt to defend herself from her cousin's veiled satire.

## CHAPTER XXII.

IDA ST. JOHN is not the only person in the world who has committed the mistake of believing it possible to run away from care.

We are most of us alike in that respect. A sorrow comes, and our first idea is to get away—to leave the spot where it happened, and find solace in far distant scenes.

Perhaps, in some cases, the remedy succeeds; for instance, one may drown remembrances in a constant round of gaiety and change, and excitement, but to go from a dull place to a place still duller is about the worst possible method of obtaining oblivion.

Ida had not been in her new home two days before this truth came home to her very forcibly.

The Chateau Vert, as it was called, was certainly the very gloomiest place she had ever entered, and the presentiment of evil that had seized on her when she saw it first strengthened with each hour that passed.

Its staff of domestics was small, an old Englishwoman, named Keziah Hepburn, being at the head as housekeeper, and to her Ida immediately took a great dislike.

She had once been a handsome woman, but years had wrought their cruellest havoc on her beauty, and now she was so plain as to almost merit the title Ida had bestowed on her—"hideous."

Sir Douglas, albeit very much disappointed in the Chateau, which was in an extremely dilapidated, not to say ruinous, condition, found consolation in the library, which contained some old and rare books that he had long wished to possess. As a consequence, he was inclined to overlook the other disadvantages of the place; indeed, as a matter of fact, they were hardly disadvantages to him, seeing that he spent the whole of his time amongst his books and papers.

"I wonder why we ever came to this out-of-the-world place!" exclaimed Ida, one morning, as she was sitting with her work, opposite the Baroness.

"Why did we come!" he repeated, in mild surprise. "Why, we came to please you, did we not?"

"I did not want to come here."

"You said you did not care where you went, so that you were out of England."

This was true, and the girl could not gainsay it.

"I confess it is rather dull," added Sir Douglas, after a pause, "but you don't want to go into society, do you?"

"No, no—a hundred times no!"

"Then I don't see that we can do better than remain here for a few weeks. When the weather gets warmer we will go somewhere else if you like, but at present it is much too cold to think of travelling unless we are compelled to do so. For my part, I am very comfortable."

After this Ida felt that it was impossible to say more. Her father had left his home at her request, and travelling had made him far from well for a day or two, so that it would be positively selfish to ask him to take another journey so soon.

Besides, when she quitted the Manor House, her great desire had been to escape the least risk of Dering's obtaining an interview with her, and here she was at least safe from that danger.

She tried to make herself as contented as she could, began to read novels, and when she found her own troubles pushed those of the heroine out of her mind, she resolutely set to work on some elaborate piece of crochets—a counterpane that had been in process for the last five or six years.

But Ida was no Penelope, and one afternoon she jumped up in a passion, and flung her cotton to one end of the room and her crochet needle to the other.

"What idiots some women are who spend all their spare time in fancy work!" she exclaimed aloud, in her old impetuous fashion. "Oh, dear, I wish I were at home once more!"

But wishes were no good, and rather than sit down to the hated counterpane again, she went out into the passage, and began to roam about the house.

There was no danger of an intrusion from the servants, for their apartments were cut off from the others, being on the east side of the house, so the girl was free to wander



about, and give entire reins to fancy, if she were so inclined.

What a curious old place it was! An odd jumble of English, and French, and non-descript architecture. The parquet floors looked cold and cheerless on this wintry day, and the hot air from the caloriferes was insufficient to dispel the damp that clung about the walls.

Ida drew a woollen shawl closer round her shoulders, and then went along from one corridor to another, opening the doors as she went, and peeping into the rooms. For the most part they were uninteresting, being sparsely furnished, and containing none of those English comforts on which Colonel Fanshawe had dilated when he had offered the use of his house to Sir Douglas, but by-and-by she came upon a small sitting-room quite different to the rest, and fully meriting any amount of encomiums.

The door was locked, but the key was in the lock, so the girl had only to turn it and enter. It was not a large apartment, but it was furnished with such exquisite taste that one would not have wished it different in any single particular. A Persian carpet, whose rich dyes had faded a little, but were still beautiful, covered the floor; pictures were on the walls, interspersed with mirrors; small tables, puffy armchairs, and a hundred little nick-nacks were scattered about, and the windows were shrouded with curtains of some Eastern fabric, in which gold thread was plentifully mixed.

It came upon Ida quite as a surprise, more like an enchanted vision than reality, although her quick eye at once detected that none of the furniture was modern in spite of its showing no evidences of having been used.

She looked about her with a great deal of curiosity, examined the pictures and statues, and finally came to a standstill in front of a small work-table, most elaborately fitted up with gold thimble, scissors with silver handles, and ivory and silver stiletos.

"So this was intended for a lady!" she soliloquised, as she peered inquisitively at the different articles it contained. "Yes, it was clearly intended for a lady, but if I mistake not, the lady never used one of these things. Papa says Colonel Fanshawe was never married, so there is a spice of mystery and romance about the house after all."

Ida would have been no true woman if she had not felt a very sincere desire to know what the mystery was, and as it happened she possessed even more than her share of that curiosity which Mother Eve has bequeathed, in a more or less degree, to all her daughters. All sorts of wonderings and imaginings drifted vaguely through her mind, with the result of making her feel a greater interest in Fanshawe than she had hitherto done.

"Perhaps he was engaged to somebody once," she said to herself, replacing the gold thimble in its velvet case with a certain tenderness, "and at the last moment, when he had prepared this room for his future wife, she jilted him. Poor man." The work-table was close against the window, and Ida moved it a little to one side in order to look out and see the view. As she did so, her attention was directed to a curious blotchy appearance on the carpet, which the table had hitherto stood upon and concealed. She bent down to look at it, but drew back with a low cry of horror, for the stain was of a deep, dark red colour, and it looked like blood.

A superstitious terror took possession of her, but it only lasted a moment; then she laughed at herself for her folly.

"I shall become a drivelling idiot presently if I don't mind what I am about," she said. "Frightened by a stain on the carpet! Why, a child of seven years old would be braver."

It was all very well to scold herself, but no amount of scolding could do away with the impression made upon her nerves by that sinister red mark, which lay there as a silent

witness of some past crime, some dark deed, committed perhaps years ago, but not yet buried in the oblivion that knows no resurrection.

In order to divert her attention, Ida proceeded to examine the other articles the room contained, her final pause being made in front of a writing-table—a very pretty and artistic writing-table—of inlaid woods, lined with leather and stamped in gold. Now, it so happened that Ida had been prevented from writing home that day by the fact of not having any note-paper, an item which she had forgotten in the hurry of packing. When, therefore, she saw a blotting-case on the table, she immediately opened it, with the determination of taking some paper if there happened to be any there.

Her hopes were disappointed the case was empty, but as she idly turned the leaves her attention was attracted by a name on the blotting-paper. As it was written backwards, she could not of course decipher it, but by holding it up to the light it became clearly visible, and judge of her astonishment when she saw her own name—"Idalia St. John."

"Idalia St. John!" The girl rubbed her eyes, almost imagining she was dreaming, or the victim of an optical delusion; but a pretty severe pinch, self-administered, convinced her of the contrary.

She looked at the signature again. It was written in a fine Italian hand, clear and legible, and very different to her own bold, upright calligraphy—evidently the handwriting of a lady. Her mother's name had been the same as her own, "Idalia," but what should bring her signature here in this French chateau?

The young girl sat down, a puzzled frown contracting her brows, while she thought over the situation. Her first impulse was to go to her father and show him what she had found, but second thoughts counselled otherwise. He would certainly get excited, and the remembrance of her mother could not fail to be painful in whatever form it was brought before him.

No, she must keep her discovery secret—at least for the present. There was evidently some mystery here, whose nature she could not even guess, but she was too shrewd and clever not to believe that she might penetrate it.

"And pray what may you be doing here?" exclaimed a harsh voice, which had the effect of startling her very considerably, for she had been so entirely wrapped in her own musings that time had passed unheeded.

Looking up she beheld Keziah Hepburn at the door, regarding her with no amiable expression of countenance.

Ida was not the sort of young lady to allow an inferior to speak to her in such a tone, so she quietly tore the leaf out of the blotting-book, and took no notice of the question.

"Do you know you are where you have no right to be?" went on the housekeeper, advancing farther into the room.

"I did not know it, but as you say so I am quite willing to retire," was the quiet response.

"What have you got there?" inquired Mrs. Hepburn, pointing to the blotting-paper.

"That is no business of yours."

"It is my business—or, at least, it is my master's business, so it comes to the same thing. While he is away it is my duty to look after his property."

"Quite right," assented Ida; "and as you put it in that way I am perfectly willing to gratify your curiosity. It happens that I have forgotten to bring with me any blotting-paper, so I have taken the liberty of borrowing a sheet from Colonel Fanshawe. Have you any objection to my taking it?"

The woman grunted out an ungracious "Humph," and a minute later added,—

"What brought you in here?"

"Fate."

Ida gave the answer in mere girlish wilfulness, but it had an effect upon which she had

not calculated. Keziah's sallow face grew very pale, and she glared at her companion with eyes that looked positively savage.

"You are too ready with your tongue, young woman—a great deal too ready," she muttered. "There's many a true word spoken in jest, as you'll find out before you are much older."

"You are very impertinent!" exclaimed Ida, angrily. "If you continue to speak to me in such a manner you will force me to complain to Colonel Fanshawe."

The housekeeper laughed mockingly.

"Complain to him as much as you like; it will be more than your complaints that would make him get rid of me! You think too much of your pretty face, young lady, but mine was far prettier once, and you see where the beauty has gone now. You will be in the same plight some day for all your pride, and then you won't be quite so cocky. Now, will you be good enough to leave the room, as I want to lock the door?"

Disdaining to reply, and feeling that she had rather the worst of the situation, Ida marched grandly from the apartment, her silken draperies rustling against the housekeeper's skirts as she passed.

Mrs. Hepburn at once closed the door, locked it, and put the key in her pocket, as she went off, muttering, as was her habit,

"She is a horrible woman," muttered Ida to herself, when she had got back to her own room. "I wonder if my nose and chin will ever meet like hers do!"

She went to the glass to view the two members, and was satisfied with her survey. No, there was certainly very little danger of her retreating nose—"tip tilted" she called it—ever coming in contact with that charming little dimpled chin; nevertheless, she breathed a sigh.

"What a pity women should ever grow old!" she murmured, as she turned from the mirror.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE third day after the appearance of his advertisement Verrall took up the *Times*, and, according to his usual custom, glanced down the "agony column." As he did so a slight exclamation fell involuntarily from his lips.

"Hulloa!" said Arthur, who was his only companion. "Have you got an answer at last?"

Verrall silently pushed the paper towards him, and he read,—

"Eric is bidden to be of good cheer. A friend watches over his interests, and the mystery that perplexes him is in process of clearing. Patience, and all will be well."

"What does it mean?" asked the Viscount, as he put the paper down.

"I cannot tell you," replied Verrall, "but it seems pretty clear that there is some one who knows all about me—unless, indeed, the advertisement is a hoax."

"It is not a hoax. What would be the use of anyone attempting to deceive you?"

"None at all, so far as I can see."

"I am inclined myself to think the answer perfectly genuine," went on Arthur, thoughtfully, "and am infinitely more hopeful than I was when you inserted yours. To be candid, I thought at first that your idea of finding out who your parents were was just about as sensible as looking for a needle in a haystack, and your chances of success equally hopeless."

"And now?" asked Eric, as he paused.

"Now, I am by no means of the same opinion. As you remark, this message is a sure sign that yours was understood, and I should judge the person who wrote it to be perfectly sincere in his or her assurance."

"But why tell me to wait—why not put himself in immediate communication with me?"

"Ah, that I cannot tell you, but I should imagine it to be the same reason that has kept you in ignorance of who you really were for such a long time. Of course the whole

thing is a mystery, but it seems to me there is now a chance of its solution."

Eric did not reply, but remained thoughtfully silent for some time; then, acting on a sudden impulse, he told Arthur of the note he had found on his pillow, and—watching the young man very carefully—saw that he was most profoundly astonished at the occurrence.

"Who, in the name of all that is marvellous, could possibly have written it?" he exclaimed. "My grandmother is the only member of the family who goes in for secrets, and mysteries, and those sort of things, but she would hardly counsel you not to go to India, when she has been at such pains to procure the appointment for you."

"Just what I thought myself."

"It really seems as if there were some person in the Court who knows all about you."

"It seems so—or at least the idea struck me, but I dismissed it as absurd."

"It is absurd—on the face of it—and yet —," Arthur paused—his handsome, frank face clouded over with doubt; then he said, suddenly, "How would it be to have a private detective down, put him in possession of the whole facts of the case, and let him follow it up?"

But to this Verrall strongly objected. He wished as few persons as possible to know of his affairs, for who could say what shameful secret might come to light during their investigation?

"No," he added, "whatever there is to be done I must do it myself."

He took up the paper, and re-read the advertisement. A moment later he exclaimed,—

"Here is a second paragraph headed 'Eric,' a few lines below the other, and it says, 'Remain in England.' What do you think of that?"

Arthur did not know what to think of it, and took the *Times* from his friend, almost as if he doubted the truth of Verrall's words. But there the advertisement was in plain letters, and they had only omitted noticing it in the first instance on account of their attention being entirely occupied with the one above.

"You see my unknown correspondent knows all about my intention to leave England," observed Verrall.

"Yes; and if you asked my opinion I should say that the advertiser and the writer of the note you found on your pillow are one and the same person."

Eric was inclined to agree with him.

"Do you think two people inserted the two advertisements?" he asked, presently.

"That I really cannot tell, but it is by no means improbable that they may have emanated from the same pen, although, for reasons of his own, the advertiser wished it to appear otherwise. What shall you do about going to India?"

"I am very undecided—I really hardly know what is best. On the one hand I cannot afford to lose such a chance of promotion, on the other I don't like leaving England at this particular time. What do you advise?"

"My dear Verrall, I am incapable of giving you advice, for I certainly was never mixed up in such a mysterious affair before; and, to tell you the truth, I hope I never shall be again. Mysteries are uncomfortable things at the best of times, but when they enter your own house they are a deuced sight worse than when they keep to the newspapers."

Arthur pushed his chair away from the table, and lighted a cigar, which he would not have dared to do had his grandmother been present. Fortunately for him, Lady Hawksley generally breakfasted in her own room, and on this particular morning Lord Westlynn had finished his meal before either of the young men were down.

For some time they both remained silent, Arthur, watching the blue clouds of smoke as they floated in wreaths above his head; Eric, with his head supported by his hands, and his

elbows on the table. At last the latter sprang up.

"I have decided, Arthur! Promotion or no promotion, I will obey the voice of my unknown guide, and remain in England. If I were in India I should torment myself to death with my wonderings and surmises, and never get a chance of finding out the truth; whereas if I remain here I am, at least, on the spot, and ready to take advantage of any chance that may be given me. What do you say?"

"That were I in your place I should act in precisely the same manner. But you must let my grandmother know of this fresh decision on your part."

Verrall's face fell. He was the very reverse of a vacillating man on ordinary occasions, and it irritated him to be forced into the position of one now, especially as his refusal must necessarily sound ungrateful after Lady Hawksley's endeavour to obtain the appointment for him.

"Yes," he answered, "I suppose I must, and the sooner I can get it over the better pleased I shall be."

Accordingly he sent up to the Dowager at about twelve o'clock, asking if she would favour him with an interview; and on receiving a gracious assent went to her sitting-room, where he found her at her writing-table.

"Good morning, Captain Verrall," shaking hands. "I am very pleased to see you. You need not have asked my permission to come to me, for you are always welcome."

"You are very kind," he said, in some embarrassment, which she was quick to notice.

"Not at all. I know my opportunities of seeing you are limited, as your time in England is now drawing to a close."

"It was on that point that I wished to speak to you. I am sorry to say that circumstances have arisen which force me to stay in England, and consequently I shall not be able to take advantage of the kindness you have shown me."

"What!" she shrieked, interrupting him.

"Do you mean that you will not go to India?"

"That is what I do mean."

"But you must be mad—mad!" she exclaimed, angrily. "When do you suppose you will have such another good chance offered you?"

"Never, perhaps; but all the same, I shall have to decline it."

He was greatly astonished at the way in which she took this declaration. Her face grew livid, and she absolutely trembled with anger.

"Do you know, Captain Verrall, that in making a fool of yourself like this you make a fool of me also?" she demanded, in high, staccato tones. "What do you think the Duke of C—, to whom I applied on your behalf, will say when he hears that you have declined the post?"

"I am extremely sorry, madam; but, as I said before, circumstances have arisen which render my refusal an imperative necessity."

"What circumstances?"

"That, Lady Hawksley, I am not at liberty to inform you."

"Nonsense!" she said, rudely, and looking at him with her piercing black eyes. "You owe it me to give me your reasons."

"Of that you must permit me to be the best judge," he returned, a tinge of hauteur in his voice, and drawing himself up with a pride equal to her own.

She was silent for a few seconds, scowling at him from under her black brows; then her manner suddenly changed, and she said, suavely,—

"Come, Captain Verrall, you and I must not quarrel, seeing that I have made up my mind to be your friend. If I have spoken rudely on the impulse of the moment, I am sorry; but you must confess it is annoying after I have gone to some trouble on your behalf to find it all thrown in my face, so to speak."

"It is annoying, Lady Hawksley, and I deeply regret the necessity that compels it."

"Will you not be candid with me?" she went on, in the same bland tones. "I am an old woman, and I have had a wide experience of life in its manifold phases, so that I am really competent to give you advice if you are in any emergency—as I judge you to be."

For a moment Verrall was almost inclined to take her at her word, for she made no idle boast in her last sentence, and her keenness and sagacity might help him a good deal; but then the feeling of distrust with which he had at first regarded her, and which frequently made itself felt even when she was kindest, awoke within him, and froze the words on his lips.

"I am sure your advice would be as wise as it was kind," he said, in his courtliest manner, "but, unfortunately, it would not assist me in my present position. I hope you will not think me ungrateful, for that is assuredly not the case."

"I think you are a fool!" she snapped, with a return to her former sharpness. "And so you will think, too, in a few years' time. If you are counting on promotion in your regiment you are leaning on a rotten reed, let me tell you, for in these days promotion is more slow than sure, and you'll soon regret not having taken an appointment which is very good in itself, and is safe to lead to something yet higher."

"Perhaps you are right," he responded, with imperturbable good humour. "We all of us make mistakes sometimes—even Lady Hawksley herself is not infallible."

She flashed one of her keen, rapid glances at him, and bit her lip.

The firelight played upon the diamond rings she wore, and Eric could see by their unsteady scintillation that her hands were trembling.

What could there possibly be to cause her this agitation, in the simple fact of his deciding to remain in England? he wondered, for vanity would not persuade him that it was entirely because she thought he was throwing away his chances that she was so annoyed.

"Yes," she said, in answer to his last remark, "we all make mistakes sometimes, it is true, and you have made one to-day, Eric Verrall, take my word for it!"

As she spoke she fixed her eyes on his, and he positively grew pale as he met the malignancy of her glance. She might have been some vindictive old witch, gifted with the power of the "evil eye," and bent on exercising that power against him at that particular moment.

Self-possessed as she was—and she certainly could control her feelings as a rule—she was human after all, and the very human failing of hatred sometimes overcame her. It did now, and the nature of the woman, for one instant, stood revealed in all its ugly nakedness, casting aside the clothing of hypocrisy, which years of training had put upon it.

Verrall was startled, and suddenly there flashed across him the conviction that for some reason or other Lady Hawksley wanted to get him out of England. Whether her motive was the jealousy of her grandson's affection, which she had once confessed, or some other reason, personal to himself, he did not know; but the idea took root in his mind with all the tenacity of a proven fact, and no amount of future politeness on her part, or feigned interest in his welfare, would ever displace it.

"May I ask how long you intend remaining at Dering Court?" she inquired, with a sneer, which she was at no pains to conceal.

Verrall coloured painfully, but replied, with as much coolness as he could muster,—

"I cannot tell you at present. Lord Westlynn has been kind enough to invite me to consider his house my home."

And with this parting shaft, which—he could see by her face, went home—he left the room.

"That old woman hates me like poison," he said to himself, "and if she could do me an injury she would do it! I should not care



to be in her power, for she is not the one to show mercy unless she thought she would gain something by it. Well, I don't suppose she can do me much harm as things stand at present."

And, consoling himself with this idea, he tried to dismiss the unpleasant subject from his mind.

Somewhat to his astonishment, Lady Hawksley appeared at luncheon, and no one seeing her, as she took her seat at the head of the table, would ever have guessed that the smiling, urbane hostess, could be identical with the fury who had cast her withering glance on Verrall an hour ago. Her manner to him was the same as usual, perhaps a trifle less familiar.

"Your friend is very naughty, Arthur," she observed, shaking her finger playfully at him; "he has greatly disappointed me."

"Indeed," said the Viscount, indifferently.

"Yes, he has put me to a good deal of trouble, and then won't take advantage of it."

"Fate has interposed, and he has to obey her dictates," returned Dering; then, dismissing the subject, he said to Eric, "You are coming with me to W— this afternoon?"

"Certainly. What time do you start?"

"Directly after luncheon."

"And what time may you be expected home?" inquired Lady Hawksley.

"Oh, sometime before dinner, I expect. Why do you want to know?"

"Because I am going to call on Miss Fitzherbert, and I did not know whether you would care to come with me."

"I shall not be home early enough," responded the Viscount, to whom the charms of Hilda and her cousin were, at this moment, supremely indifferent. Badly as Ida had treated him, or as he supposed she had, she was the only woman who ever occupied his thoughts.

Lady Hawksley watched the two young men drive off, and Verrall caught a glimpse of her hooked nose as he glanced up at her window.

"Do you know," said Arthur, breaking the silence that ensued after they had started. "I shall apply for leave of absence and go abroad. I can't stand this sort of thing any longer. I want change and excitement, and I can't get either while I remain here. It will be a hundred times worse when you are gone."

"But where shall you travel to?"

"America, perhaps, or Asia—I really care very little where I go, so that I get some sport. I shall get some bear or buffalo hunting, and perhaps try and pot tigers in Bengal jungles. There is no reason why I should stay in England."

"Except that your father may not like the idea of your risking your life."

"That is true," observed the Viscount, thoughtfully. "Unfortunately, I am his heir, and if anything happened to me the title and estates would pass to a distant cousin. I wish I had a brother who could succeed to them."

"Nonsense! You will marry and have children of your own sometime."

"Perhaps so, but it will be a marriage of convenience, not love, and you may depend upon it I shall defer it as long as I can. I wish to Heaven, as I said before, that I were not the heir."

"If you were not, you would wish you were," said Verrall, drily.

"No, for my desires are extremely moderate, and I have often thought how jolly it must be to be free and untrammelled as you are."

"Human nature!" murmured Eric, philosophically. "Human nature, always longing for the unattainable, never satisfied with what it has!"

"Well," returned Arthur, laughing, "it is better so, for if it were satisfied there would be no incentive to brave deeds or famous actions—"

"Man never is, but always to be blessed!"

He gave the mare a flick with his whip as he spoke, and the high-spirited animal started off at a quick gallop, which he tried in vain to check. He pulled hard at the reins—so hard that his wrists ached for days afterwards, but it was of no avail.

"By Jove! she's got the bit between her teeth, and no mistake!" he muttered, while Verrall, who saw the situation was growing serious, added his endeavour to those of his friend's, and with such effect that one of the reins snapped in two.

"What's to be done now?" exclaimed Dering, in consternation.

"Nothing, save to hold on with all our might, so as to prevent ourselves from being thrown out," responded Verrall, with as much coolness as he could muster.

"All very fine, but there's a sharp curve in the road a little way farther on, and we are pretty sure to come to grief."

"Then we shall have to do the best we can, but at present we are quite helpless."

A few seconds later, and Arthur's prediction was fulfilled. The mare turned sharply round the angle, the wheel of the dogcart catching on the high bank that bounded the road, and turning the vehicle completely over, thus bringing the animal to a standstill in her headlong career.

Both Verrall, Dering, and the groom were thrown out, but luckily the roads were covered with mud and slush from the recently melted snow, and this protected them in a measure.

When they rose to their feet, feeling about to see that no bones were broken, they presented a most ludicrous spectacle, being covered with mud from head to foot.

"I am all right," announced Verrall, as the result of his investigation. "And you?" turning to Arthur.

"I am afraid I can't say the same thing," ruefully responded the Viscount. "It strikes me very forcibly that my ankle is broken or sprained or something; at all events, it pains me to put my foot to the ground, and I'm quite sure I can't walk home."

"Is there a surgeon anywhere about here?" inquired Eric.

"Yes—about a quarter of a mile away."

"Then had you not better go to him and let me return to the Court and send a brougham to fetch you back?"

"I think I had. Perhaps, as the mare is quiet now, and unlikely to cut any more capers, I might get on her back and ride to the doctor's."

The groom (who, luckily, was uninjured) and Eric assisted him to mount, and then Verrall set off at a quick pace towards the Court, devoutly hoping he might not meet anyone on his way.

He was no dandy, but he knew that his appearance was ludicrous in the extreme, and he had no more relish for being laughed at than have the rest of his sex.

As it happened, his wish was realised. The afternoon was not tempting, and few people were out, so he reached the Court unseen, and having given orders that a brougham should at once be despatched for Lord Dering at the surgeon's, he went upstairs to his room—or, rather, it would be more correct to say, he reached the corridor in which his room was situated, for arrived there he made a pause.

Kneeling in front of his door, her eye at the keyhole, was a small, slight, brown-haired woman, wearing a cap and glasses, and apparently intently engaged in watching someone within.

After looking at her for a moment, Eric softly advanced and put his hand on her shoulder.

She started violently, but did not for a moment lose her self-possession, and met his gaze quite calmly.

"Have you the key of your door?" she whispered, making a swift gesture of silence.

"If so, unlock it as quietly as you can, for there is someone inside."

Very much astonished, Eric took the key from his pocket, for having left his papers strewn about the room, he had not stayed to put them straight before leaving with Arthur, but had locked the door, in order that they might not be interfered with.

The woman snatched the key from him and took from her dress a tiny bottle of oil with which she anointed it, then noiselessly slipping it in the lock, she turned it, and threw open the door, standing on one side so that Eric might enter and she herself remain unseen.

He took a step forward, and found himself confronted with Lady Hawksley.

(To be continued.)

## BUT NOT OUR HEARTS.

### CHAPTER IX.—(continued.)

"MOTHER, who on earth is that beauty with the amber hair?" demanded Etta, in a fierce whisper, as for a moment she dropped the arm she was leaning on, and which belonged to that desirable matrimonial *parti*, Washington C. Spragg, Esq., and approached her mother.

"Opal Vane," replied Mrs. Bevoir, almost coldly, for she knew a storm would break over her head later on.

"What made you ask her? She puts us quite in the shade."

"I did not do so. They are Lady Dorothy's friends."

"Horrid old woman. She has done this to spite us."

"Hush," replied her mother, with an apprehensive glance around, for her ladyship was a power in the fashionable world, and rich, so it would not do to offend her. "You are indiscreet. You had better go back and entertain your partner."

"I might just as well save myself the trouble," she rejoined sullenly. "Look at his eyes. They are glued to that Vane girl's baby face. Our chance in that quarter is lost."

Nevertheless she went back and laid her hand with an almost convulsive clutch on his arm again, and led him off to the conservatory, he going with extreme reluctance, for he was dying for an introduction to the lovely girl whose sweet face had been ever before his eyes since they first dwelt on it.

To Opal the whole scene was like a glimpse of fairy-land. The polished floor, slippery as glass, the panelled walls, with their gold moulding, the lace draperies, the rose-tinted lights, the shapely broad-leaved palms, the graceful ferns, the masses of exquisite flowers that were grouped in every available space and corner, the beautiful women, with their rich dresses, flashing jewels, and waving plumes, made up a whole that was brilliant and pleasing in the extreme to the girl who had never before participated in such amusement.

She was quite unconscious that she was the fairest and most remarkable object in the room, and was rather overwhelmed, and not altogether pleased, at the numerous requests for her programme, as she wished to give most of the dances to Paul.

"How many have you kept me?" he asked breathlessly, when at last he extricated himself from the gay widow's clutches.

"I hardly know," she responded, dolefully.

"They have taken so many."

"Five have gone already," he announced, scanning the little shoe, and standing before her so that he shut her off from the eager crowd of applicants. "How many may I have?"

"I should like to give you all that are left," she answered, "but aunt made me promise that I would not make myself conspicuous by dancing with you too much."

"May I have six, then?" he queried, mutter-

ing something between his teeth which was not entirely complimentary to 'aunt.'

"Oh! yes," with a shy, upward glance from the deep eyes, that set his pulses throbbing in a very mad fashion.

"This one is not taken," as the band struck up an enchanting air. "I shall have it as an extra;" and without waiting for permission he put his arm round the slight waist, and whirled her away from the circle of admirers, down the whole length of the long room.

"Who is that young lady?" asked Mr. Spragg of Miss Clementina Bevoir, who had taken her sister's place, and was leaning on his arm, and looking unutterable nothings into his eyes, which she was well able to do, as she was nearly as tall as he was,

"Which one do you mean?" she replied, wilfully misunderstanding him, for she had had a few minutes' conversation with her sister, and knew that their reign as belles of the county was over; that they were displaced, dethroned by this mere beggar-girl, whom Lady Dorothy had brought into their midst, and that, despite their dashing mien, splendid dresses, and no small share of beauty, for the future they would have to play second fiddle to the lead of this insignificant nobody, who had never been heard of or seen until this most unfortunate evening, when she had appeared and broken forth like a blazing meteor, dazzling all beholders.

"The one in white, with forget-me-nots."

"There are a good many in white. You must particularise the lady you mean better," she responded, envy lurking in her bosom.

"The loveliest girl in the room then," returned the American, forgetting, in his anxiety to learn Opal's name, that he was doing a most ungallant thing, praising one lady to another, speaking in the superlative case, too, thus adding insult to injury, and producing no end of vinegar in an instant.

"I suppose you mean that little creature who has appeared in society for the first time to-night?" she said, freezing.

"Yes. I think I heard some one say this was her first dance."

"She is Copeland Vane's eldest daughter."

"Vane—Vane! I wonder where I have heard that name? It sounds familiar to me."

"I wonder too, as they are nobodies, and not mentioned in good society."

"Do they live about here?"

"Yes. At a tumble-down hovel called the Rest," she answered tartly, little thinking she was thus describing his own property.

"The Rest. Let me see, where is that? Near Dene?"

"Yes. Just the other side of the village?"

"Then I suppose it belongs to me."

"Does it?" she stammered, having the grace to blush.

"I think so. I bought a place of that name from Chichester."

"It used to belong to them."

"Then I am Mr. Vane's landlord," he said reflectively.

"That is a natural consequence," she observed, with increasing acerbity, "and I can only say that I hope you will get your rent. I am sure they haven't paid any for a long time."

"I don't mind about that," he observed, with a smile. "Twenty or thirty pounds won't make much difference to me."

"No, but if all your places are let to paupers it will."

"All my places are not let to paupers," he replied calmly, looking at her keenly, for he began to wonder what made her so hard and bitter against the Vanes.

"Good thing for you they are not. I should advise you to turn them out as soon as you possibly can."

"No, I won't do that," he said slowly, thinking for all her good looks that the second Miss Bevoir was rather a nasty, vicious young woman, and quite unaware that envy and jealousy made her so.

"You may regret not doing it."

"I may, yet somehow or the other I don't think I shall."

"They will, I am sure, prove most unpleasant tenants."

"That remains to be seen," he said aloud; adding to himself, "I'd pay them to stay in the little cabin, only to let me have a glimpse of that sweet face now and then."

"I have no patience with Lady Dorothy bringing such objectionable people to our dance. It will be talked about all over the county to-morrow."

"I daresay it will," said the American, pointedly, who had not been blind to the admiration Miss Vane excited. "I am sure Lady Dorothy never thought of the mischief she might do bringing such girls into society."

"Perhaps not. But she ought to have thought. Had she reflected for one instant she would inevitably have come to the conclusion that their presence would be objectionable to us. They are looked upon as little better than savages, and their attire, generally, is that of well-to-do beggars."

"Really. Don't you think the gown she has on to-night is rather pretty-lookin', and certainly simple, and becoming?"

"Oh! it's well enough for such a person. I prefer something more stylish," and she glanced down at the yards of shimmering silk, decked with costly lace and flowers, that lay around her in billowing waves, and swept over her companion's feet.

"A more elaborate costume would hardly be suited to such fresh beauty and youthfulness," he said reflectively, unconscious that he was offering her a fresh affront, and reflecting on her frills and furbelows.

"Indeed! You are quite a critic on ladies' dress."

"I guess I am a little. My countrywomen do dress, you know."

"I know they do, and I am therefore the more surprised, as you must be accustomed to very stylish toilets, that you should have even noticed the wretched flimsy muslin that girl has on."

"Daresay I shouldn't have noticed it on anyone else. But it strikes me as being just the right settin' for such a jewel," he declared, with horrible candour.

"Really, Mr. Spragg, I shall put you down as Miss Vane's most ardent admirer," she ejaculated with a ghastly smile, that ended in her teeth clenching on her nether lip.

"Don't do that," he rejoined quietly. "Others who have known her a time must be more ardent than I am. Still I'll be much obliged by your introduc'g me to the young lady in question."

"You must excuse me," she replied frigidly. "but as Miss Vane is not known to me, I cannot, of course, presume to introduce any partners to her."

"Surely you may in your own house?" he expostulated.

"I would rather not. And—my mother is beckoning. Excuse my leaving you," and Miss Tina floated across the room with great alacrity, leaving her partner staring after her retreating form in blank astonishment.

He was utterly amazed, and totally unable to account for her extraordinary conduct, and well he might be. He could not look behind the scenes, and see the death's head that grinned at the feast, the poverty that threatened them in the future the moment the breath was out of Mr. Bevoir's body! He was not a vain man, despite the amount of flattery and attention that had been bestowed on him by members of the fair sex; he never for an instant imagined that any young woman of average good looks would fall in love with his wrinkled, parchment-like face at first sight; and seeing evidences of wealth on every side, it never occurred to him that Clementina was seeking a rich spouse, and would be only too happy to become Mrs. Washington C. Spragg on very short notice.

"Very strange!" he commented, as he walked towards Lady Dorothy, with a view

to renewing the acquaintance they had made a few days previously.

"Do you know many here?" he asked, after a little conversation.

"Nearly everyone in the room," she made answer.

"It's much pleasanter to know all the people," he observed.

"Yes, if one is a dancer. Doesn't make much difference to me."

"I should have thought it would be pleasanter to sit and watch friends than strangers."

"And note all their peculiarities and absurdities of demeanour, eh?" with a sharp glance at him.

"I did not mean that. Only people one knows are more interesting."

"Well, perhaps you are right; and there are two here who interest me very much."

"Indeed! Some young relatives, I presume?"

"My grandnieces. Here is one coming towards us now. Shall I introduce you?"

"If you please."

"Mr. Spragg, Miss Ruby Vane," and the American found himself bowing before an extremely handsome girl.

"May I have the pleasure of this?" he inquired, offering his arm, which the Duchess accepted at once, and leading her to a quadrille that was being formed.

"You have a sister here, have you not?" he asked, when the dance was over, and they were steering in the wake of others towards the refreshment-room.

"Yes; the sole one I possess."

"Really. Are there but you two?"

"Oh! dear no; we have four brothers."

"Quite a large family."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes; but, then, I am an only child."

"That makes a difference. We think we are just a nice number."

"And so you are for brotherly and sisterly intercourse. Are your brothers grown up?"

"No, boys; two of them little fellows."

"You are not much like Miss Vane. I suppose she is Miss Vane?"

"Yes, and I suppose you thought I was the eldest?"

"You certainly look older; but your aunt, having introduced you by your Christian name, I conclude you were not."

"You see you concluded rightly. And what do you think of Opal?"

"Opal?" he demanded, inquiringly.

"My sister," she explained.

"I think she is very lovely," he replied, with an amount of warmth that made the Duchess look at his queer face fixedly.

"Hard hit," she said to herself. "Pity he doesn't fancy me, as I am free. Shouldn't relish a 'dry goods' man, though."

Aloud she said (for despite her many faults of character and warped nature, she was not an atom jealous of Opal's superior charms), "her face is her least beauty."

"Indeed! she must be very perfect, then."

"She is in our eyes. Perhaps we are partial critics."

"No wonder if you are; you must be extremely proud of so much grace and amiability."

"We are. The boys idolize her."

"And your parents?"

"Our mother is dead, and father—well—he—he likes books best," she replied, with an awkwardness entirely foreign to her, and that did not escape her companion's sharp eyes.

"I believe your father is a tenant of mine?"

"Yes; we live at the Rest."

"I hope to have the pleasure of calling on him shortly."

"He will, I am sure, be pleased to see you," she replied, suavely, her quick brain imagining on the instant great things resulting from the visit.

"May I ask you to introduce me to your sister?"

"Certainly," and she led him over to her



sister, who was chatting with Jack Rainham, the rector of Dene's son, a fine young fellow of two-and-twenty, and an old playmate of theirs.

"Opal, Mr. Spragg wishes to be introduced to you."

At these words the girl lifted her head and bowed; but as her eyes met the glance of the American's sunken orbs, twinkling from under their bushy brows, a shudder ran through her from head to foot, and her cheek lost some of its rich bloom.

"Am I too late for a dance?" he asked, with a smile that made the long, grinning teeth look more repulsive.

"No, I have one left, but it is rather far down," she replied, faintly.

"May I have it?" he queried, eagerly.

"Yes," and he took the silver shoe, and inscribed his name on it, while Jack, who had always greatly admired Ruby, sauntered off with her to a quiet nook in the conservatory, and began telling her how much she had improved during the past year while he had been away; how often he had thought of her, and how glad he was that his father could have him for his curate, thus enabling him to remain in the vicinity of the Rest; and many other things that were pleasant to her, and which she listened to, despite the fact that honest Jack's fortune, all told, was barely two hundred a year. But then this alliance with her old playmate was merely an interlude—a pleasant interlude.

She was almost too young to seriously think of marriage for at least a year; when the year was past, if the opportunity offered, Jack would have to go out of her life, and one or two other things as well, and sufficient for the day, etc.

So she let Jack hold her hand in the dim twilight conservatory, and talk soft nonsense, and put his mustached lips very near her ear in so doing, and did not give a thought to that future which, however hard and unlovely, would have to be faced—some day.

Meanwhile Washington C. Spragg was improving the golden opportunity, and trying to make himself agreeable to Opal, which he failed to do signally. True, he held a queer sort of fascination for her, because her eyes stole back time after time to that mummy-like face, with its fierce eyes and almost lipless mouth; but at each glance she experienced a sensation of horror and repugnance, and was more than pleased when Paul came and carried her off to supper.

"What was that fellow saying?" he asked, with a backward jerk of his head towards the mummy, who was escorting Lady Dorothy to a place near them.

"Not much. Asking for dances chiefly."

"Did you give him any?"

"Unfortunately there was one left, which he has taken."

"Unfortunately! Don't you want to dance with him?"

"No."

"He dances very well."

"Not as well as you do."

"That is a matter of opinion, dear. His countrymen are famed for their good valuing."

"That may be. Still, I would much rather he had not asked me."

"You don't admire him then, as most of the ladies do?"

"Admire him! Paul, he is horrible!" Her voice sank to a whisper, and again the roses faded from her cheek, as she caught his eyes fixed on her face.

"Don't look at him," said her lover, passionately, "and he can't shock your delicate nerves."

"I can't help doing so. He seems to fascinate me."

"Oh! indeed, madam. I must stop this fascination," he laughed, and he planted himself in such a position that his broad shoulders shut out from her sight the face that displeased her.

For the rest of the evening he remained as

much by her side as possible; he loved her so dearly he could not bear that anything should cause her a moment's pain or annoyance. Yet he was obliged to give place to the American when he came to claim his dance, and bear seeing his arm round his lover's lithe form with an appearance of indifference which he was far from feeling.

To Opal that value was awful. She thought she must scream when his arm clasped her, and she felt his face near hers, his hot breath fanning her cheek. He was a perfect dancer, yet the relief she experienced when it was over was intense, and very different from the feeling with which Spragg reluctantly let her go.

"Well, sweetheart, did you enjoy it?" whispered Paul, when they were on their homeward way.

"No—yes," she stammered. "Part of it."

"And that was the part passed with me?"

"Yes, Paul," and then the fair head sank on his shoulder, for Ruby considerably gave up the back seat to them, and pretended to snore in her corner, and under cover of the friendly darkness he stooped his lips till they rested on hers, and took his fill of those sweet caresses the memory of which was to go with him for far lands and distant climes to last him for many long and weary days and silent nights, when they were apart, and the mighty ocean rolled between them, and be the only consolation he could have.

#### CHAPTER X.

"You won't forget me, Opal, will you?"

They stood together two days later, saying their last adieu down by the Dene levels. The setting sun threw his golden glory into pool and reach, and glittered on the distant river; and the pine woods, tipping the trees with his mellow light, bathing the meadows in a misty radiance, streaming between the dark boles of the trees, with their tawny-leaved branches, and resting on the girl's fair face, and amber hair, till it seemed a mass of precious threads. Standing in such a halo of light her beauty looked unearthly to the man at her side.

"You won't forget me?" he said again.

"Forget you! No, I think I shall not do that," she answered, with a slow, sweet smile of incredulity.

"You might."

"I hardly think so."

"Three years! It is a long time."

"Do you doubt my love, Paul?"

"No, no. Only promise me that I shall be the same to you then as I am now?" he cried, imprisoning her hands in his.

"I can promise that, my dear one. You will always be the same to me as you are now—the one love of my heart, the first, the best, the dearest—let the time we are apart be three, thirty, or a hundred years. What is time to those who love as you and I do, or even death? I shall but love thee better after death," she quoted, looking at him tenderly.

"I believe you," he answered. "You will be true to me always?"

"Always!" she echoed.

"Yes. Let nothing part us. You know what you are to me. Be merciful, then, and let no other earthly consideration come between us, and shut out the sunshine from my existence."

"I will not," she answered, firmly. "You shall ever be my first consideration."

"Thanks, thanks, my darling! I worry and pain you with my prayers and entreaties, and—"

"Nay," she interrupted, softly; "you never pain me—except when you leave me."

"Sweetheart!" he ejaculated, pressing her to his breast, for in that lone spot the only living things that witnessed the embrace were Turk, who sat gravely on his haunches near them, and a wild duck, as it winged its flight o'er the silent moor pools. "How I wish I could stay with you now and always; pass

the whole of the rest of my life at your side, never leaving you even for a single hour, sharing every pleasure and every pain; to increase one and lighten the other. Think, Opal, what complete happiness would be ours if I could stay—if an untoward fate did not tear me from you!"

"Nay," she answered, with a tremble in her voice. "I dare not think of it; it would make a coward of me, the contrast between the joy of having you with me always, and the pain of losing you for a long, long while."

"Let us hope the time will pass quickly," he said cheerily, for he saw the tears sparkling in the azure eyes. "Who knows, perhaps, I shall come back sooner than we think?"

"Is there any chance of your doing so?" she cried, eagerly.

"Only a slight one, dear. I fear three weary years must pass before I look upon your sweet face again."

"Oh, Paul!" Her head sank on to his breast, the arms round his throat tightened their clasp convulsively, as though she would keep him with her; and he, seeing how painful the parting was becoming to her, gently loosened the clinging fingers, and pressing a dozen passionate kisses on cheek, lip, and brow, whispered,—

"Farewell, my dearest love, farewell. Heaven bless and keep you always," and strode away.

Turk bounded after him, but he ordered him back, and the great fellow shuffled slowly and reluctantly to his new mistress, and so they stood side by side, the dog and the girl, watching the man so dear to them both as he hurried along to Evesham, where he was to take the train to London, and then to Portsmouth to join his ship. Opal had begged to be allowed to see him off from Evesham station, but he was jealously tender of her reputation; and knowing how sharp-tongued the gossips of a country town are, and how eagerly they hunt about for the smallest shred of evidence, upon which to start a scandal, and tear a reputation to pieces, had gently told her that as she had no one to go with they had better say their last adieu on the Dene levels, unseen and unwatched by prying orbs.

Silently she stood straining her eyes after the retreating figure, and many and many a time Paul turned to kiss his hand, and wave his handkerchief, until he reached the pine-wood adjoining the town. There he stood for a full moment looking at the slight figure, standing out distinctly against the background of pale amber sky, athwart which the setting sun shed ruddy rays and purple bars; then with a last wave of the white flag he turned, and plunging into the wood was lost to sight.

Just as he disappeared the sun sank finally to rest, in his mantle of deep-hued clouds, and a sudden darkness fell over the earth. To Opal it seemed that all light and brilliance had fled, not only from the world, but from her life, and that the darkness was typical of what her existence would be during the next few years; and with an uncontrollable fit of anguish she flung herself on her knees and hiding her face in Turk's shaggy coat, wept bitter tears, while convulsive sobs shook her frame.

Turk did his best to console her, thrusting his great nose into her eyes, and licking her face and hands in his endeavours to show his sympathy. At last her grief wore itself out, and, rising, she walked slowly towards her home, the mastiff pacing in a stately fashion at her side, looking up at her every now and then to see how she was getting on, and uttering a terrific bark of joy when she stooped and patted his massive head.

"Well, has he gone?" asked Ruby, as she entered the den.

"Yes, he—has gone," with a little catch in her voice that was almost a sob, and which did not escape the other's sharp ears.

"Poor Paul. I wish he could have stayed. You mustn't fret about him," she continued, seeing the other's pale, sad face; "he wouldn't

like you to do that. You must look forward to his return."

"It is such a long time off," despondently. "A long time to look forward to, a short time to look back on," said the Duchess, promptly and briskly.

"It will seem a century to me."

"Not if you occupy yourself with other things, and don't brood over his absence too much."

"It is so hard to occupy oneself with other things when one person, and that person absent, fills one's waking thoughts and sleeping dreams, and leaves little room for aught else."

"True. Still I am sure you will do it, as you know what he would wish."

There she struck the right chord, and Opal looked up and said, "Yes," quite brightly.

"That is right. Now take off your hat, and have some tea," and Ruby drew down the blinds, shutting out the melancholy dusk of the early autumn night, rang for Jenny to bring in the hissing urn, called the boys in from the garden, and set to work to cut bread-and-butter.

"We have had a visitor to-day," she announced, looking up from her occupation.

"Have you?" said Miss Vane, listlessly.

"Yes. Aren't you curious to know who it was?"

"Not in the least."

"Well—who do you think it was?"

"Aunt Dorothy, I suppose."

"You suppose wrong, then, my dear; guess again."

"Mrs. Marshall."

"Peoh! Mrs. Marshall is much too busy now to be able to pay us even a flying visit, for which I am truly sorry."

"So am I," piped Billie, thinking of the cakes and preserves she invariably brought with her.

"Then if it were not that estimable person it must of course have been the equally estimable, and I have no doubt to you far more welcome, Jack Rainham."

"Wrong again," laughed Ruby, while the rich colour mantled to her cheek.

"Then I give it up."

"Really!"

"Certainly. I can't think of anyone else. Our circle of acquaintances is rather limited."

"It is at present; it may widen."

"It may, but I don't think it likely."

"Not probable, yet possible."

"Hardly possible."

"Circumstances alter cases," sententially.

"What do you mean?"

"Aunt Dorothy has come back to England and taken us up again, and now another grand person is being very polite there is no knowing what these attentions may lead to."

"What other grand person?" demanded Opal, with a vague, and unaccountable feeling of alarm.

"No less a one than Washington C. Spragg, Esq."

"That horrible man!"

"Complimentary. I don't see that he is so horrible; he looked very well to-day on horse-back."

"What did he come for, the rent?" with an apprehensive glance at the Duchess, who was calmly pouring out the tea.

"That I can't say, as I did not see him. But I should imagine he simply came to pay a visit."

"Did father see him?"

"No; he was very much *en déshabille*; it would have taken at least half-an-hour to get him out of that old workhouse dressing-gown and into a decent coat, collar, &c., so Jenny was told to say 'out,' and Copeland Vane, Esq., has been like a surly bulldog robbed of his bone ever since, and declares a great chance has slipped through his fingers."

"A great chance! Of what?"

"That is exactly what I want to know. Perhaps he thinks he might have borrowed a few stray five-pound notes of the rich

Yankee, or that he would have adopted the twins, or have asked him to dinner regularly once a week. Wish he would. Save me a lot of trouble if he did," she concluded, with a sigh.

"I hardly think he will do that."

"Nor I."

"I wonder what made him come here?"

"Do you? I don't!" and Ruby's eyes dwelt on the fair face opposite with undisguised admiration.

"Why?" asked the owner of the face, unconsciously.

"Why? Oh! because we are of a good old family," she answered, evasively; "one of the best in the county."

"But we can't do him any good, we are too poor."

"Poverty doesn't matter to him; and, remember, Aunt Dorothy has a handle to her name. It will be something for him to boast about to his friends that he is intimate with the cousin of an earl's daughter."

"Intimate!" ejaculated Miss Vane. "Surely our father does not intend to become intimate with a tradesman?"

"Quite likely that he will, if he thinks he can make anything out of the tradesman."

"But he has not visited for some years past now; he won't be able to throw off the habits of retirement he has contracted since we have lived here."

"Won't he? You don't seem to know much of the capabilities of our respected parent. Before the week is out, unless I am very much mistaken, the poor aristocrat will return the rich snob's visit."

"I hope not!"

"Then your hopes will be disappointed."

And they were.

Copeland Vane, four days after, arrayed in a coat of faultless cut, a hat with much-curved brim, and a pair of tan gloves, remnants of his former prosperous days, walked over to Temple Dene, to return the call of his new neighbour.

"What a miss, what a miss for the child!" he murmured, as he walked up the stately avenue. "To be mistress of a place like this would be a rare stroke of luck. And that young fool Chichester threw it away for a fad, a mere sentimental notion about honour and debts. Pahaw! He ought to have lived in the middle ages, and have been a knight-errant, not in these prosaic days, when honour's a mere word, and everybody looks after his own interests, let it cost others what it may. Most men's motto nowadays is 'Each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost.' Certainly it is mine, and I don't intend to be the hindmost if I can possibly help it. No, not at all. Being in the front rank suits me best, and having the cream of everything. Lucky fellow this *parvenu*. Wonder what his weak point is? Must try and find it out, and make the best of my knowledge when I have found out," and, with a smile on his thin lips, Mr. Vane ascended the steps, and inquired of Benson if his master were at home.

The answer was an affirmative, and he was ushered into the green room, where Spragg was writing.

"Mr. Vane! This is indeed kind of you to return my visit so soon, especially as I understand you are somewhat of a recluse!" he ejaculated, rising, and welcoming his guest with a warmth that slightly astonished him.

"Not at all," he responded, with that courtly grace of manner he knew so well how to adopt when he chose. "I am only too glad to have the opportunity of telling you how glad I am to welcome you to these parts as a neighbour."

"That's very kind. I am extremely glad to see you, and I hope we shall meet often."

"I hope so. My place, or rather your place, for I understand the Rest now belongs to you, is not a very pleasant spot, but whenever you wish to honour my humble home with a visit I shall be delighted to receive you."

"Thanks. I won't fail to avail myself of your invitation," returned the American,

warmly, feeling as though he would like to get up and embrace the haughty-looking pale-faced man, with his delicate patrician features, and dark hazel eyes, in his delight at the invitation, which would give him the run of the house in which Opal dwelt.

"It won't bear comparison with the smallest room here, and is anything but—"

"But something you have there will!" interrupted Spragg, quickly.

"And what is that?" he inquired.

"Your daughters."

"Ah! my girls!" he exclaimed, feeling he had stumbled on the weak point, and wondering which it was that he admired most.

"They are very lovely!"

"You flatter me by saying so."

"Not at all. It is the truth," he answered, simply. "I have never seen more beautiful faces."

"And doubtless you are a good judge," smiled his guest, "and have seen many types."

"Yes. I have seen handsome women in almost every great city in the world, yet not one that would compare with Miss Vane for delicacy of outline, or Miss Ruby for brilliancy of colouring."

"That is a most complimentary and pleasing speech for a father's ears. But I must ask you not to spoil my girls by saying anything about their good looks to them personally."

"I should not think of doin' that," responded his host, hurriedly. "You may trust me implicitly. Young ladies should not be flattered. Their chief charm departs when they become conscious of their beauty and concealed."

"I quite agree with you, and my daughters know little of the world, and are very innocent, not having mixed at all in society."

"Indeed!" remarked the other, with an accent of deep disappointment. "I was hopin' that I should meet them at the entertainments in the neighbourhood."

"No. They have not been out as yet, with the exception of that dance at Mrs. Bevoir's, to which their aunt, Lady Dorothy Derwent, took them."

"And where I had the pleasure of meeting them?"

"Yes," acquiesced Vane, with a graceful bend of his shapely head.

"Then—then—I suppose," continued the American, with some hesitation, "that you would not allow them to come here to an entertainment I am thinkin' of givin'?"

"Well—I hardly know," rejoined the other, with an affectation of reluctance he certainly did not feel. "I should not like to refuse your invitation, nor to debar them from what I know would be a great pleasure to them, but—they are so young."

"It is a fête I think of givin'," explained Spragg eagerly. "I thought I ought, you know, for the tenantry and villagers."

"Yes, yes, quite right."

"With dancin' and fireworks in the evening. Perhaps you would allow Miss Vane and her sister to come in the afternoon?"

"Well, since you press it, I consent."

"Thanks, very much. I shall welcome them to my cabin, and be sincerely glad that they will grace my fête with their presence."

At the word "cabin" Vane lifted his gold-rimmed eye-glasses and stared straight at his host for fully a minute.

"Deuced ugly, and a queer way of expressing himself," was his mental verdict; aloud he muttered some intelligible words, meant to be thanks.

"And you will come yourself?"

"I shall have much pleasure in doing so."

"That is right. And now if it will not trouble you too much, will you give me the advantage of your superior knowledge with regard to my neighbours, and tell me whom you think I ought to ask and whom leave out?"

"Certainly," and forthwith the needy aristocrat wrote out a long list for his host, gave him several useful hints, went over part of the house and estate with him, to see if



the alterations and repairs were all *comme il faut*, admired his new carriages from Laurie and Marner's, his new horses from Tattersall's, and his French cook, his German steward, and many of his other possessions; stayed to dinner with him after refusing, and being very much pressed enjoyed the dainties, long strangers to his palate, that appeared at it, the perfect wines, and the perfect way in which it was served, and finally took his leave, well satisfied with himself and his host, a satisfaction which the latter shared in full, and congratulated himself twenty times during the course of the night upon the evident fact that Copeland Vane meant to be friendly to him, and that that friendliness meant he would often see the face with its soft azure eyes, and frame of amber hair, that had made such an impression upon his hitherto unimpressible heart.

"Which is it?" muttered Vane, as he walked through the dusky lanes on his homeward way. "I'd give a sovereign, and Heaven knows I can't afford it, to be certain. He's deep, in a way, for I couldn't tell for all my fishing which he admires most. But he's hard hit (unconsciously repeating what Ruby had said), that's plain enough, and he means business if ever a man did. Now if it is Ruby who has taken his fancy all will be well; she is just the sort of girl to snap at the golden bait eagerly. If it be Opal," he went on slowly, "the task will be more difficult. Still should he wish to make her, and not the other one, mistress of Temple Dene and his vast fortune, mistress she shall be, or else my name is not Copeland Vane."

And the clear starlight, as it fell on the pale face, showed a cruel curve about the thin lips, and a sinister gleam in the dark eyes that boded ill for the future happiness of Opal and her sailor-lover.

(To be continued.)

He who lives with a good wife becomes better thereby, as those who lay down among violets arise with the perfume upon their garments.

**IRON AS A PRECIOUS METAL.**—Iron and copper were the only metals known to the natives before the arrival of the Europeans, and they were both called in Herero language by the same name. The civilized Hereros now use foreign words for copper, silver and gold, while lead has received its name from the bullets into which it is cast. The pastoral tribes of the Hereros and Ovambandierus have but few smiths of their own, but are served by itinerant smiths from other tribes, who wander around, working in small companies, among the chiefs, till they have earned enough cattle to justify them in returning to their homes. Sometimes they are political refugees, who have excited the anger or jealousy of their chiefs in Ovamboland, and are compelled to turn their backs upon their homes till a change of dynasty takes place. These Ovambo smiths brought iron from their native country, where the art of extracting that metal and copper from the ores is understood, and rich ores are found. Iron could formerly be got in Ovamboland only at the cost of great labour, and the smith had then to carry his store on his back some fifteen or twenty days' journey. The metal, therefore, commanded a very high price. As late as about 1840 a simple bracelet of iron wire was an adequate guest's present, and a large fat wether could easily be bought with a span of the old hoop-iron with which trunks were bound. The natives were greatly astonished at seeing the costly metal wasted by the Europeans in boot-nails. Iron had thus the value of a precious metal, and, rusting and changing but little in the dry climate, was worn in ornaments by the Hereros, while other tribes preferred copper and brass. The native smiths now use European iron, and seek out good steel, such as is found in files and bayonets. But iron forged in the old-fashioned way into ornaments and weapons has still considerable value.

## GLADYS LEIGH.

### CHAPTER IX.

It was an awful struggle. Gladys Leigh loved the man she had known as James Lorraine with all her heart. The girl who had had so few on whom to lavish her affections had given to this stranger the love of her life. Despite her father's death, despite the loss of home, she knew quite well she could have been happy—aye, more than happy—if only she might have spent her life at this man's side.

He was rich and she was poor, but no thought of his wealth tempted her; if only he had been a needy, struggling man things might have been easier. As it was, something in the girl's heart told her quickly if he broke his troth for her sake it would be a stain upon his house. He loved her, she needed no words to tell her that; but would even her love atone to him for the consciousness that he had broken his solemn word? In time to come, when the heat of his passion had abated, might even he not feel quite sure all he had to offer her had not influenced her in her decision?

Not that Gladys had any idea even yet of her lover's exact position; she still believed him a busy, professional man, only she thought he was rich and had high connections, whose notice, had, perhaps, raised him suddenly from the embarrassed condition he had spoken of as his when first he wooed his fiancée.

Royal grew alarmed at her silence.

"Gladys, my love, my own!" he cried, passionately; "don't keep me in suspense. Just give me one word of hope—just tell me my great love for you is not all in vain?"

Then the girl answered him, speaking in her own sweet voice, but in a dreamy, far-off manner, almost as though she were talking to herself.

"No love is in vain," she said slowly; "and yours has brightened my life for ever."

"Then you will not send me away?"

She never seemed to hear him; she went on still in that dreamy, far-off voice.

"Wherever I may go," she said, "whatever troubles may be mine, I shall remember this hour; and the thought of how you loved me, of all you were ready to sacrifice for my sake, will comfort me as nothing else could do."

"Gladys," he took her hands despairingly and drew her yet nearer to himself, "Gladys, you cannot mean that you are going to send me away?"

"I must."

"Listen," he urged, "I am going home to-morrow. I will see my father; I will move heaven and earth to get my freedom if only—"

"No," she said, with a quiet decision in her voice, more convincing than any string of words; "I could not bring such a blight upon your life. I could not let you stain your honour for me."

"But—"

"You must marry her," went on Gladys, gently; "you must keep your word."

"At the cost of my life's happiness?"

The girl answered him by a strange glance from the depths of her blue-grey eyes.

"Love is not all a man's life," she said, gravely; "you have so much else to fill your days—wealth, fame, professional duties—you won't miss me very much."

"I shall miss you every hour of my days."

She shook her head.

"Think how little you know of me—how seldom we have met! In time you will grow to look upon this just as a mere fleeting incident of your life. You will have your wife, your parents, your friends—this three months will just slip from your memory."

"Never, I am not good at forgetting."

"To be faithful unto the dead is not in man's nature," quoted Gladys, gently; "and I shall be to you as if I were dead."

"Do you mean you will rob me even of your friendship?"

"I mean that we must part—if not for ever, at least for long, long years. I should feel myself a traitress to your wife were it otherwise."

"And where shall you go?"

"I don't know."

"Gladys, change your mind; come with me now, this very night—we can be married privately in London. When I return to my father's house let me take my wife."

"No."

"Do you know you are spoiling two lives?" he asked, angrily. "Do you know that my whole future will be dreary?"

"And what will mine be?"

"You say you are acting for the happiness of—of my betrothed. Gladys, can you really think so? Do you imagine that loving you with every fibre of my nature I shall make a good husband to another woman?"

"Yes."

"You have more faith in me than I have myself."

"You will make her happy," answered Gladys. "By the memory of to-night you will recollect what it has cost us for you to keep your word to her, and you are too noble to let the sacrifice have been in vain."

"I am not noble," he said, gloomily. "I might have been, perhaps, with you at my side."

"You are noble," she answered, "or I would not have loved you. Be true to yourself, and let me be proud of you, even if I never see your face again—even though I do do not even know the name you bear in the world."

"Shall I tell it you, Gladys?"

"No," she said, after a little pause; "it may seem strange, but I think I had rather not. To me you will always be Mr. Lorraine. I don't want to know the name you bear in the world—the name you will give to your wife."

A long, long silence followed on her words. Both of them knew that this was their last meeting as lovers—nay, probably their last meeting at all. To-morrow our hero was going away; most likely, even if he returned to Fanshaw Castle, Gladys Leigh would have left her cousin's. There was no telling he would ever look into those blue-grey eyes again. It was probable, nay, certain, even if he met his darling in the future, he would have a stately wife beside him. No, this was their real farewell, and being so who can wonder that neither of the two could force themselves to speak the words which would most likely be their last adieu?

"Gladys," pleaded the strong man, passionately, "at least grant me this. If you are in any trouble, if sorrow or suffering comes to you, send for me."

She shook her head.

"I couldn't. Don't you guess what this parting is to me? I couldn't bring such pain upon us both a second time."

"But you are so lonely, so friendless!"

She smiled bravely, but oh! the pitiful sadness of that smile!

"I don't think when people have one great sorrow they mind little things so much. Three months ago, I think, to go among strangers as a dependent and work hard for my bread would half have killed me. Now I don't seem to care. You need not trouble about me, dear; I don't think when people are very, very unhappy they often die."

One hot tear dropped from his eyes on to her hand. It told Gladys at least that if she suffered cruelly her lover suffered too.

"I cannot bear to let you go. I have brought nothing but sorrow into your life. Oh! Gladys, why were we ever allowed to meet?"

"I shall never regret our meeting."

"Not after all I have made you suffer?"

"No, you have taught me that there is something nobler and better in this world than pride—you have shown me what lov

is. I wouldn't unlearn this lesson even if I could."

"Gladys!"  
 "And at least you have given me one true friend. I like Miss Adair very much. I feel even when she is Lady Fanshaw and I am a poor dependent, she won't forget me. She is so sweet and true my want of position won't make any difference to her. If ever you have self-reproachful thoughts about me, call to mind, dear, that to you I owe the only woman friend I ever had."

"There is Mrs. Jewell," he said suddenly.  
 "Mrs. Jewell is too connected with my old home for her kindness to avail me much."

Another pause. Both knew the moment had come for them to part; but oh! the task of saying so was a hard one.

Gladys was the braver of the two. It seems to me in cases of this sort it is the woman who always is the braver. Resolutely she drew her hand from Royal's.

"I must go home."  
 He had drawn a penknife from his pocket, and now he severed one long golden tress from her bright head, then he looked inquiringly into her eyes.

She understood the silent request, and did not refuse it. With hungry, eager lips he pressed one burning kiss upon her lips.

"Gladys, my love! my darling! farewell!"  
 Another moment and he was alone, and a slight girlish figure was hurrying quickly back through the lonely grounds.

Since her first meeting with Miss Adair she had paid many visits at the Vicarage.

Her absences from the Gables excited no comment, as, about the time of Royal's discovering her whereabouts, the whole family of the Pearsons had migrated to London, whither Cousin Sophy and her fourth daughter had joined them, on the conclusion of their visit, so all through the time of her meetings with her lover Gladys had been, to all intents and purposes, alone.

She was thankful for it to-night; she could creep upstairs to her own room and shut herself in with her aching heart.

She shed no tears. It was characteristic of Gladys that great trouble seemed to deaden all emotion in her; she was quite calm and dry-eyed, only she felt as if a crisis in her life were past, that never, never more could she be a girl again.

She paced the room with eager, restless strides, walking up and down until she was so weary that sheer bodily fatigue obliged her to sit down; then, with her face buried in her hands, she seemed lost in a reverie.

She did not regret her decision; could that last hour have come again she would still have refused to let her lover stain his honour for her sake; but still, there was one point she did regret, that she would willingly have recalled—she wished she had allowed him to tell her his true name.

She had refused at the moment, because she thought she could not bear to know the title she might have borne, but now she mourned over her ignorance.

She knew she should never forget to-night, that her love would never change. It would have been a comfort to her to hear of his career, to read of his fame; above all, she would have liked to know when the ceremony took place that rendered her love a something she must give her whole energies to conquer.

I fancy it is so with every woman who loves and loves in vain. They may know the man they love bound by solemn engagements to another, but yet, even though they realise the sacred nature of a betrothal, so long as he is unmarried their affection seems to them no wrong; it is when his wedding-bells have chimed, when they know of deed and truth another woman is his wife, that, if they be women true and loyal, they rouse themselves and struggle with their love, conquering all earthliness in the affection, even though their hearts break in the effort.

Should such a fate ever come to you, reader—be not angry at the thought; it comes to

some of the youngest, the fairest, of us sometimes—should it ever be your lot to love and yet to be no smiling fiancée, take my advice, and do not shrink from hearing the details of the ceremony which makes the man you love another woman's husband. If it be possible go to his wedding, not as a guest—as a mere spectator. The sight of the ceremony, the sound of his voice taking those fatal vows, will calm the tumult at your heart, and help you to realise that a page in your life is closed, and must be lifted for another, whatever the consequence.

But Gladys had shut herself out from this. Never would she know that Royal was irrevocably another's. She must go on for years wondering dimly whether at the eleventh hour any strange chance had given him his freedom.

Midnight had struck before she thought of going to bed; then, as for the first time she cast her eyes upon the dressing-table, she perceived a little note directed to herself in the now familiar writing of Lillian Adair.

Gladys tore it open with a strange yearning at her heart. After to-night's agony the Gables and its neighbourhood must be full of painful associations for her; the one thing she had strength to desire was to go away. Perhaps Miss Adair had at last heard of something to suit her.

"MY DEAR GLADYS,—At last we have received a satisfactory answer to the advertisements, and it only rests with yourself to arrange matters. I do not like to go into details by letter, but if you will come over to-morrow we can have a long talk. Mrs. Carr sends her love, and hopes you will stay to lunch.—Your affectionate friend,  
 "LILLIAN ADAIR."

Lillian was young herself, and in love, so when she heard from Lord Fanshaw of Royal's departure she was quite prepared to see Gladys arrive pale and dispirited, but even she was amazed at the girl's appearance. It seemed to Miss Adair that Gladys looked like one recovering from a serious illness. Her eyes were too bright, and her face had a flushed, feverish look; yet when her excited colour went down it was quite wan, almost haggard, and there were dark hollows beneath her eyes, as though she had passed many sleepless nights.

It showed the rare delicacy of Lillian's nature that she never remarked on this. She only kissed Gladys with much tenderness, and said,—

"All the children have gone out to spend the day, so Mrs. Carr and I can have quite a serious consultation with you."

She did not say they were both agreed that though the situation was not quite all they had wished, yet Gladys had better take it, since change of scene and regular occupation would best divert her mind from the evil they suspected—a love-dream too roughly checked.

It may seem strange that Lord Carew could have been so long at the Castle without Gladys learning his true title, but the Pearsons had been from home almost the whole of his visit.

Gladys knew no one in the neighbourhood except the Carrs, and the servants at the Gables carried on an inveterate feud with those at the Castle, so even if she had been the sort of girl to pick up news from the maids Miss Leigh would not have been likely to hear anything of Lord Fanshaw's guest.

It was late September, a beautiful sunshiny day when summer warmth and autumn breezes were mingled in the pleasantest way. The Vicarage drawing-room—a quaint, old-fashioned room—looked the very picture of comfort, and Mrs. Carr's kindly welcome almost brought the tears into Miss Leigh's eyes.

"And have you really heard of something for me at last?" she asked, anxiously.

"Really. I made Lillian write the preliminary letters to save you disappointment. The matter is so far settled that the situation is yours to accept or decline."

"I shall accept it."

"Gently, dear," interposed Mrs. Carr. "If only your life at the Gables were not so uncongenial I should counsel you to refuse it. Mrs. Coniston requires a companion. She lives in good style, and offers a salary of sixty pounds a-year. The duties are not onerous; but, I confess, I don't like her letters."

"Why not? Isn't she respectable?"

Mrs. Carr laughed; she couldn't help it. "Eminently so; but she seems to me, Miss Leigh, to have very little sympathy and consideration. Her letters are too full of herself. It would be a safe and comfortable home for you as far as worldly things went, but I think you would be as bereft of affection and sympathy as at your cousin's."

"But I should be independent."  
 They showed her the letters, and she read them through. She gathered that Mrs. Coniston was about sixty, that she had ample means, and lived alone in a country house a few miles out of Birmingham.

She had been without a companion some time, and was particularly desirous of meeting with one soon, as her niece was there on a long visit to her, and found it dull without suitable society.

"I should like to go!"  
 The other two looked at her wistfully. To them she seemed too young and fair to go forth into the rude world to seek her fortune. Some strange instinct warned them both that Mrs. Coniston would not be a congenial employer.

They could not have explained their reason for this impression; they had confessed to each other nothing in either of the widow's letters warranted it; but still the impression remained.

On the other hand, they knew that Royal Carew would be frequently at Fanshaw Castle that autumn (they were quite in ignorance of the scene that had taken place the night before, which banished him from the Castle while Gladys remained at the Gables), and they saw at any cost Gladys must not be too much there.

All this duly remembered, there is nothing surprising that Gladys wrote by that day's post to Mrs. Coniston accepting the engagement, and promising to be at Springfield on the following Monday.

Lillian had given Mrs. Carr's name as reference, and she had been written to and replied before they submitted the matter to Gladys.

Literally, as Lillian had told her, she had nothing to do but say "Yes" or "No."

"Monday," commented Miss Adair, quietly. "That is very soon. Your cousins will not be home."

"I think I am glad."

"Glad?"  
 "I shall leave a letter thanking Cousin Sophy for her kindness. I would like to have seen Janet; I think she loved me; but for the others, it is only a relief to be spared saying 'good-bye' to them."

"But you will leave your address?"

"I think not. I want to forget this episode of my life. I have suffered a great deal at the Gables. I accepted Cousin Sophy's invitation, thinking she would be like my mother. I found her. Well, you know what she is. She fancied I had moved in good society, and would introduce her girls to fashionable people. Her invitation sprang from that, not from kindness to me. Of course I failed utterly in the purpose I was destined for, and she won't be sorry to be rid of me."

This was strictly true.  
 "Remember, Gladys," said Mrs. Carr, pleasantly, "though I do live in the place that is so distasteful to you, I shall expect you to spend your holidays at the Vicarage, unless you have any more agreeable invitation."

Gladys blushed.  
 "How good you are to me!"  
 "What holidays will Mrs. Coniston give?"



pondered Lillian. "Did you ask her, Gladys?"

"I never thought about it."

Busy days followed. Gladys found herself fully occupied with her preparations. Mr. Carr chanced to be going up to town on Monday, and he took Miss Leigh under his charge as far as Euston-square, and saw her safely into the train.

"Remember," said the Vicar, kindly, as he bade her good-bye, "if you are not comfortable you must write and tell us so. My wife looks on you as partly her charge, you know."

"She has been very good to me."

Mrs. Carr was good to all waifs and strays. It strikes one that if there were more women like her there would be fewer lonely girls, fewer heart-sick ones; but, unluckily, when women marry their thoughts and interests too often get absorbed in their husband and their nursery, and they have too little interest in the great seething mass of humanity outside their homes. It is a fact, though it is a pity it should be so.

Married women, *even*, from the mere fact of being married and being heads of a household, do an immense amount of good, but for the most part they leave all their exterior duties to their maiden friends. This ought not to be.

It was a lovely day, the sky clear and cloudless, the air fresh and exhilarating. In spite of that swift gain at her heart Gladys enjoyed her journey. She had travelled so little in her nineteen years that everything was new and strange to her.

There is nothing very remarkable in the scenery between London and Birmingham, but to Gladys it seemed one moving panorama.

When the train stopped at Coventry she put her head out of the window to try to see the "three sisters," whose spires have been vaunted by Tennyson, and wondered how much the ancient town had changed since the days when the Lady Godiva, according to its old legend, was its greatest benefactress.

Another half-hour and she was at Birmingham. The noise and bustle seemed almost distracting. Gladys was thankful when she was in the small local train which was to take her to Tower's End, the nearest station to Springfield.

It was not a long journey. Almost before she realised it they had left the great manufacturing town behind, and were in the open country.

Ten minutes more and the name henceforth to be so familiar to her appeared in staring letters on a white board for the benefit of such ignorant people as should not know from the solitary porter's nasal cry of "Tunseend" that the small and unpretentious suburb of Tower's End was really reached at last.

Gladys was the only passenger to alight. She and her two boxes shared the sole attention of the porter and stationmaster between them.

"Where are you going, miss?" inquired the latter, with as much surprise as though the advent of strangers was a very rare event—which it was.

"To Springfield."

"Springfield!" and it seemed to Gladys there was an accession of respect, not unmixed with compassion. "Are you Mrs. Coniston's young lady, miss?"

Gladys confessed she was.

"The carriage is waiting, miss—has been here an hour. I will say this for Mrs. Coniston, she always seems eager to get her young ladies, though she never manages to keep them."

Gladys felt as if she had received a cold shower bath—mentally, of course.

"Do you mean Mrs. Coniston changes her companions often?" she asked, involuntarily, despising herself the next moment for the question.

"She mostly has seven or eight in the year."

You're the sixth since last Christmas, miss."

Miss Leigh determined Mrs. Coniston should not have seven or eight companions in this particular year. She would hold the fort against all provocation.

Still, this conversation had depressed her, and she stepped into the carriage sent for her with a heavy, heart-sick feeling of disappointment.

It was a very handsome carriage, a little too old-fashioned for modern ideas. The coachman and footman were in sober liveries, and even the fine horses had a demure air, as though plainly convinced of the vanity of the world and all things therein.

It was a five miles drive, so it was getting dusk when Gladys at length passed through the lodge gates of Mrs. Coniston's estate.

One thing she could discern, even in the gathering gloom—everything was old. There would be no display of suddenly-acquired wealth, as at the Gables.

Springfield Park had the appearance of an ancestral estate; its turreted roof and terraced walks impressed Gladys favourably; and the old butler, who stood in solemn state in the hall waiting to receive her, might have been a duke's retainer from the imperiousness of his demeanour.

"My mistress is in the drawing-room," he said, pompously. "John, show Miss Leigh to her at once."

Through the dimly-lighted hall, across a floor of old oak, so highly polished as to be almost slippery, Gladys followed the footman. He drew back the curtains from a door, opened it, and announced:

"Miss Leigh."

John had done his part, and disappeared. Gladys advanced trembling. She saw that the vast apartment was dimly lighted by two wax candles, that the furniture was old without being picturesque, costly without being tasteful.

But her eyes turned naturally chiefly to the inmates of the room. These were two—an old lady, dressed in black velvet and point lace; a girl in a bewitching French toilet—a girl whose good looks were set off by every adjunct of dress and art, and who yet impressed Gladys far less favourably than had done Lillian Adair when she saw her first in a shabby blue serge.

"Miss Leigh," began the elder lady, "I am glad to welcome you to Springfield Park. This is my niece, Barbara Ainslie."

Barbara looked displeased at something in the introduction, which her aunt observed, and said, maliciously,—

"I have a bad memory, my dear. I am always forgetting they made your father an Earl; I always think of him as plain Bob Ainslie, the architect of his own fortunes. You see, Miss Leigh, the mistake I made. My niece is Lady Barbara, and she is a little fond of recalling the fact."

Poor Gladys! Her cheeks burned. If this was the style in which Mrs. Coniston treated her own niece, how would she behave to a dependent stranger?

It was a real relief to her when the old lady observed,—

"But you had better take Miss Leigh to her own room; I am sure she looks tired to death."

Gladys rose at once; Barbara shrugged her shoulders, and prepared to lead the way.

It was a long way. It seemed to Gladys she was lodged quite a mile away from the rest of the house, and when she saw her bedroom she decided it had not been occupied for months.

There was a strange mouldy smell about it suggestive of damp, rats, and other kindred delights.

The furniture was handsome, but comfortable. A whole family might have been lodged in the four-post bed, but the polished floor was bare.

The chairs were like back boards, and the looking-glass was so small and dilapidated

that Gladys decided it must have been bought originally—and she fixed the date of its purchase half-a-century before—as a practical reproof for vanity.

Barbara stared at her as though she were some new enigma presented to her ladyship's notice.

"Have you ever been in Worcestershire before, Miss Leigh?" she inquired, carelessly.

"Never. Is it a pleasant country?"

"The country is well enough; Springfield Park is horrid. If you imagine all the dullest places you have even seen, and then crowd their dullness into one great mass of gloom, you'll have a little idea of the gloom which prevails here."

"But you seem bright!" said Gladys, who was forgetting her dependent position, and talking to Lady Barbara on terms of equality.

"If I am I don't derive my brightness from anything here, but I am only a bird of passage. My parents are abroad, and instead of accompanying them, Aunt Coniston insisted upon my spending the time of their absence with her. She said it was the last chance of having me, and I believe she is fond of me in her way."

Barbara had been without any companion of her age for a whole fortnight, or I don't suppose she would have waxed so confidential. Her words puzzled Gladys.

"Then does your aunt expect to die before your parents return to England?"

"To die! Oh, dear, no. Whatever put such a thing into your head?"

"You said Mrs. Coniston thought this her last chance of a visit from you?"

Barbara smiled.

"Don't you know why? I am to be married in the spring, and it isn't likely my husband will spare me to pay long visits to Springfield Park."

Gladys gave one silent sigh. It seemed to her that whenever she was thrown into familiar intercourse with any girl, that girl was engaged to be married in the spring. Already she knew of two weddings fixed for that date, and now here, on her first arrival at Springfield Park, she heard of a third!

"I hope you will be happy," she said, gently, a strange trembling of the voice giving earnestness to her words.

Lady Barbara smiled.

"I think I have every prospect of it. My fiancé belongs to one of the oldest families in England. Some day I shall be a duchess."

She had turned to leave the room, but Gladys turned to her imploringly,—

"Lady Barbara."

"Well!" a little haughtily.

"I never was a companion before. Won't you tell me just a little of what I shall have to do for Mrs. Coniston?"

The heiress shrugged her shoulders.

"I really don't know. To be always amiable and never to admit the dullness of this place are the chief qualifications. Aunt Penelope is very clever. My belief is she could see through a stone wall. She hates flattery, and she can't bear to be contradicted. She prides herself in not caring for any living creature; in fact, she is an oddity."

"Is she your father's sister?"

"Oh! dear, no; the relationship is far more complicated. My father's first wife was Mr. Coniston's only sister. I believe they were devotedly attached. Mr. Coniston has been dead years and years. He left his widow enormously rich, and as she has no relations of her own she has adopted us as nieces."

Gladys could have sat down and cried heartily when she was left alone. There seemed no ray of brightness in her new surroundings. Miss Leigh, young as she was, read character well, and she knew there was no sympathy, no friendship, to be expected from Lady Barbara. Of the two she almost preferred the old lady in spite of her sharp voice and caustic remarks.

Poor Gladys! she had no elaborate toilet to make, only her simple black dress, with its heavy crepe trimmings. She was soon ready,



[BEFORE MRS. CONISTON OR BARBARA HAD REALISED THE FACT, THE NEW COMPANION LAY MOTIONLESS ON THE GROUND.]

and went downstairs to find Mrs. Coniston alone in the drawing-room.

"My niece is not dressed yet," said the widow, calmly. "Barbara Ainslie is eaten up with vanity. She spends an hour every night in arraying herself, or, rather, letting her maid array her, in an elaborate French costume. She says it is a mark of attention to me, and that in the best society people always dress for dinner. She thinks I don't know anything of the fashionable world. Miss Leigh, but I was presented to Her Majesty when I was eighteen; and when Barbara's mother was that age she was a milliner's apprentice. But all that's forgotten now. Her husband got on in life, and she is a real live countess, who has a right to look down on me as an antiquated old fossil, and to bring her children up to do the same."

"Perhaps Lady Barbara dresses out of respect to you," hazarded Gladys, timidly.

"And keeps my dinner waiting for the same reason. She is always a quarter of an hour late. I declare I will go down without her," and Mrs. Coniston seized her gold-headed ebony stick and commenced her journey towards the door, motioning Gladys with a sign to follow her.

The dining-room was more fitted for a state banquet than the repast of three ladies. Four footmen were in attendance, and Gladys and her hostess had arrived at their third course before Lady Barbara appeared, resplendent in pink silk, trimmed with lace—a fine, stylish-looking woman, but with nothing girlish or tender about her face.

Gladys trembled lest another passage of arms should begin between the ladies.

And it did. Lady Barbara had hardly taken her seat, and waved away a plate of soup, than Mrs. Coniston asked, sarcastically,—

"Is it the custom of the best society to be late for every meal, Barbara?"

"It is impossible to hear the gong in my room, aunt," returned Bab, equably.

Mrs. Coniston addressed herself to the butler,—

"See that the gong is sounded outside Lady Barbara's door in future. Bab, my love, is Lord Carew as hard of hearing as yourself? If so I had better send to Birmingham for another gong before he arrives."

"Lord Carew's hearing is perfect, thank you, aunt." Dinner went on more peacefully after this. The ladies adjourned to the drawing-room, and Gladys was given some wool to wind for Mrs. Coniston's knitting.

"Unless you are tired," said the old lady, not unkindly; "young things like you want plenty of sleep, and I don't want to make myself into a slavedriver."

"I am not at all tired, thank you."

She saw Barbara glance at her sharply, but she was not prepared for the rebuke which followed.

"It is usual for persons in your position to address their superiors with respect, Miss Leigh. Your predecessors always said 'madam' in speaking to my aunt."

Gladys blushed furiously, and a hot tear trembled in her eye.

"I'll trouble you to mind your own business, Bab," said Mrs. Coniston, sharply.

"None of my companions ever called me madam except that poor relation of your mother's, whom I sent away because I found she kept a journal of all that went on here for the express benefit of Lady Saville and her daughters."

It was Bab's turn to blush now.

"Miss Marshall was admirably suited to your requirements, Aunt Coniston."

"Only I happened to dislike her. I am an old-fashioned person, Bab, but I don't care to have anyone but gentlewomen about me."

An uncomfortable pause ensued. Gladys wished herself anywhere but in that drawing-room. At last Mrs. Coniston spoke again, quite aimably, too, for her.

"When am I to have the pleasure of an introduction to Lord Carew, Bab?"

Lady Barbara simpered,—

"I hardly know, aunt. He is so very busy just now superintending the arrangements."

"But it wants six months and more to your wedding-day."

"Royal is not quite like other people," went on his betrothed. "He never will leave things to workmen, especially if they concern my comfort. At present he is busy superintending the alterations and improvements in our future home."

"It is atrocious taste to live there."

"I don't see it. The place is Lord Carew's. It is near my father's seat, and one of the loveliest spots in the county. Why should not Royal take his bride there?"

"Because it is unseemly, while the last owner has not been dead a year to make his home the scene of festivity and rejoicing."

"I don't see that the last owner deserved much pity. He was a spendthrift and a vagabond."

"He was a fine old-English gentleman," corrected her aunt. "Your ancestors were poor unknown artisans, let me tell you, Bab, when Sir Hubert's forefathers lived in almost princely magnificence at Arle Priory."

There was a sound as of some choked sob; and then before Mrs. Coniston or Barbara had realized whence it came, the slight form of the new "companion" lay motionless on the ground. After all she had gone through in the last week this blow was too much for her. She could not bear Barbara's cruel sneers at her father. She could not bear to think of Bab as mistress of the dear old Priory. One half-smothered sob escaped her, and then the blessing of unconsciousness came to her relief.

(To be continued.)

REPENTANCE without amendment is like continually pumping without stopping the leak.





["I HOPE YOUR FATHER WON'T REFUSE TO GIVE ME THIS," PHILIP SAID, KISSING THE SMALL HAND TENDERLY.]

NOVELETTE.]

## A CHANGEFUL LOVE.

—O—

### CHAPTER I.

The autumn sun was glorifying the tall oaks and elms around Oakdale Rectory, gilding the ruddy-flashed leaves, glancing on the silvery stems of the birches, lighting up the glowing red fruit of the haws, so heavily laden that the branches drooped almost to the earth, with its thick carpet of bronze, gold, and tawny fallen leaves; resting on the horse-chestnuts, with their prickly-coated nuts hanging in great clustering bunches; and the still-flowering honeysuckle, crowning the hedges with bright blossoms, and the silvery weed laying its yellow flower level on the ground for the passer-by to tread on and crush with careless foot. A belated chiff-chaff was calling in the copse, merrily as though it were spring—gay, jubilant, youthful spring—when all his feathered brethren, the swallows, starlings, finches, sparrows, were building their nests, whistling, chirping, singing the while.

They had gone forth into the midst of the silken, shining stubble, all save the swallows, who lingered yet, taking counsel wisely as they stood in rows of fifteen or twenty on the slanting greys that held up the poles of the rich-cloths spread over the yet unfinished cornricks; and the rooks, cawing loudly as they busied themselves among the acorns, and looked with contempt on the gaudy-plumaged pheasants, modestly picking up those that had fallen, content "with the crumbs," &c.

Up in a swing, slung between two giant oaks, whose ample greenery was beginning to show yellow spots, was a little child, a boy between three and four years' old, with soft, violet eyes, deep in colour as the velvety petals of a pansy silky, chestnut curls, and a

face so dimpled, fresh, and sweet that it veritably looked as if "made out of a rose."

On the grass beneath sat four others, varying in age from nine to fourteen; and at his side, guiding the swing as it rocked gently to and fro, stood a young girl, with purple orbs and chestnut tresses, so similar that it showed plainly they were brother and sister, if her tender care of him, and the proud and loving looks she bestowed on him, had not announced the fact with equal plainness.

"Higher, higher!" he cried, imperatively, with a wave of his little chubby fist. "Oo don't tend me half high enough."

"You mustn't go any higher, Robbie," she answered, gently; "you might fall out."

"Me don't tare," he announced, valiantly.

"What! Would you like to fall down and break your crown as Jack and Jill did?" queried his elder brother Dick, looking up from his occupation of stringing a kite.

"Me sudn't mind, if me tud go up, up yight to the sky, and touse it with my toot," pointing at a diminutive foot, cased in small leather shoes, ornamented with buckles.

"You small duffer!" exclaimed Gus, another brother, and a pickle, with ineffable scorn.

"You could never get up as high as that."

"'Es me tud, if Maggie poosed me hard enough."

"No you couldn't. You're miles and miles and miles away from the sky."

"No me's not."

"Yes you are, young 'un. Wait till you go to school and learn something, then perhaps you'll be able to understand these scientific matters," declared Gus, with an air of wisdom, very amusing in a boy of nine.

"Me does undertand, 'ou nassy sing," with a grimace.

"Don't tease him," interfered Dick; "he'll be in tears in a minute if you go on like that."

"The baby."

"It isn't so long since you used to cry,

Master Augustus. I remember you taking the moon for an airball, and screeching like a demon because no one felt equal to the task of sailing up to the clouds and fetching it down for you."

"Pooh! What rubbish!"

"What do you mean? It's not rubbish."

"Yes it is. I never was such a fool as that."

"Yes you were."

"No I wasn't."

"Yes you—"

"Boys, boys," interrupted Maggie, quickly, "no quarrelling. If I hear another disagreeable word there will be nothing but dry bread for tea to-night. No jam, no nuts."

This dreadful threat effectually silenced the squabblers. Dick went on with his kite, George yawned over his book, and the twins, Gus and Walter, went away to the still pond in a remote corner of the wild old garden, to gather the tall spikes of the purple loosestrife, which grew in great bunches around it, and to investigate the place where the moorhen had built her nest the winter before, and speculate on the chances of her returning to her old quarters.

"Div me one dood;swing now," whispered Robbie, entreatingly, as his brothers quieted down.

"Not very high, ducky."

"Higher den dat."

"No, sweetheart; you might fall."

"Dust once," he pleaded; and just once she swung him up farther than was quite safe, and caught him in her arms as he sprang from the cushioned seat with a crow and chuckle of baby triumph.

"Maggie, Maggie."

"Yes, mother," cried the young girl, responding to the call; her clear, sweet tones ringing out musically on the air.

"I want you; come in, dear."

"Yes, mother," and with a parting caution to Dick and George not to behave badly, she

wended her way across the soft turf, carrying Robbie astride her back, his chestnut curls mingling with her own bright tresses, as he bent his head to whisper nonsense in her ear, his dimpled face aglow with health and happiness and roguish mischief.

In the somewhat dingy morning-room sat Mrs. Dawson, and the faded crimson curtains, the threadbare carpet, the well-worn leather chairs, the shabby bookcase, with its dog-eared, soiled load of books, and the general poverty-stricken, bygone aspect of the place seemed in some peculiar way to harmonise with its sole and only occupant.

Such things formed a fitting background for her faded, careworn face, and plain, far from new, or fashionable gown.

The face had once been pretty; there were traces left yet—in the fair hair, growing thickly above the white temples; in the blue eyes, large, soft, but heavy with grief and care, that care which a large family and a small income invariably brings to the human countenance; in the delicate features and well-shaped head; but the cheek was too sharply outlined, the mouth wore a look of pain, and lines were plainly visible at the corners and round the dim, sad eyes. While, as to her gown, that had never had the smallest pretensions to loveliness, and in its coarseness of texture and simplicity of make would have been despised and rejected by many a lady-help or finished domestic.

She was in harmony with her surroundings, the poor, world-worn, weary mother. With her children it was different. The two bright, beautiful young faces seemed certainly to bring a ray of sunshine into the dusky-panelled room, but then they also seemed to lack a dainty, brilliant costly setting that would have thrown up, and brought out the delicate complexions and glossy tresses. They were lost in the dim shadows, the general gloom, yet the loving parent did not notice it, as they entered. She only saw her darlings as she wished them to be, full of health and spirits, as she greeted them with a tender kiss.

"Robbie been a good boy?"

"Very good," he declared, with confidential confidence, as he returned her kiss; and then seating himself at her feet began to "what he called" "needleworking," with a great darning-needle, and a bit of calico, industriously stitching it up one minute, and taking it to pieces the next, with a persistency and patience worthy of a better cause.

"What is it, mother?"

Maggie looked a little anxiously at Mrs. Dawson as she spoke, for she was often—too often, alas!—considering only sixteen summers had passed over her head, called in from a tea under the beeches or a picnic in the adjoining field with the boys, to be consulted as to how Mr. Southdown, the butcher, should be pacified until the Rector received his next quarter's money, or how Alderney, the milk, and butterman, should be induced to give a little, just a little, longer credit, or as to whether the boy's boots would last another week without repairing, and their coats and continuations another term, and on many other trivial, yet momentous and wearing questions.

"I have got out the gowns, dear; there they are," pointing to half-a-dozen dresses lying on the sofa. "You had better look them over, and see if you think any one or two of them could be turned to account."

"They all seem rather heavy," doubtfully, with a glance at the pile of antique finery on the sofa.

"That is what I was afraid of. This," taking up a striped silk, yellow and brown, hideous in the extreme, "is too old-looking for you."

"Yes, and too soiled," indicating a wine splash that marked several breadths with a dull, red stain.

"True. That I wore at your Aunt Mary's wedding, and a careless servant poured the contents of the claret-jug over me."

"How annoying. This is fresher, but of course I couldn't appear in velvet."

"Of course not. It could not be thought of. Still that is a beautiful thing, and will make up by-and-by for you. It was the only dinner dress in my trousseau," and the Rector's wife eyed the purple velvet with its point trimmings tenderly. It brought back to her memory many a happy day, twenty years ago, when she was a bride, and all things seemed *couleur de rose* to her young eyes.

"Alas! those days can come no more."

To this weary heart of mine,  
Though flowers may spring and larks may soar,  
And summer suns may shine."

She murmured softly, and then went on quickly to hide her emotion,—

"The blue poplin is faded, and not the sort of blue worn now; that grenadine is quite rusty, and crumpled beyond redeeming; the tulle is too soiled, and the muslin is rotten, I fear, lying by so long, and of course you would not care to wear it, I don't know what you are to do, love."

"Nor I, mother," she answered, dolefully.

"My poor girl!" caressing the fair head leaning against her breast, "and I wanted you to go. You have so little amusement, so little pleasure, in life."

"I have you, mother."

"Yes, darling. Still, this will be a grand affair, quite different from the little tea-parties you have been to at Leigh; and I know you are fond of dancing. How hard it is to be poor sometimes, and not be able to help and assist those near and dear to us as well as necessitous strangers. I suppose we couldn't do anything with the muslin?"

"I don't see why we shouldn't," returned Maggie, brightly.

"Would you wear it?" questioningly.

"To be sure I would, dear, if we can alter and modernise it. I don't believe it is rotten," taking up the soft, limp dress and examining it closely.

"Perhaps not."

"It is very fine and clear, and this embroidery is lovely!"

"Yes. Your Uncle Dick brought it from India for me as a wedding present, so I know it is good; and if it will bear remaking and getting up I don't see why we should not be able to make a pretty, if simple, gown of it."

"Nor I," cried the girl, with sparkling eyes and rose-flushed cheeks. "Have you any lace?"

"Yes; I bought some from Dame Torton last week."

"How much? Enough for trimming a flounce and the neck and shoulders?"

"Quite; I have over two dozen yards."

"That will be ample, and with some pink or blue knots of ribbon about it, it will look charming."

"I would rather have it without the ribbon, mother. Plain white, with natural flowers."

"Perhaps you are right, and that would be best."

"And about shoes, gloves, and a fan?"

"You have the silk gloves you wore this summer?"

"Yes."

"They must be cleaned, and will do you. I think I can manage to buy a new pair of shoes. They must be black ones, though, Mag; we can't afford white."

"No, indeed."

"And I think I have a fan upstairs that may do for you. Rather old-fashioned; still that can't be helped, and better than none in a hot room."

"Very much better. Shall we go and look for it now?"

"If you like," returned the mother, smiling up fondly into the beautiful, eager face, so full of expectancy; and together they went up to the room where Mrs. Dawson kept her few treasures—her few relics of that prosperous past which had departed, never to return—and after turning out many drawers and many boxes they found a small telescope fan of a

hideous buff hue, on which were depicted several ladies and gentlemen of the Watteau era in powdered wigs and laced coats, a horrible travesty of the original thing, nevertheless very acceptable to Maggie, who took possession of it at once, remarking that it was as well to have everything ready in good time, in which her mother quite agreed; and the rest of the afternoon was spent in taking the muslin to pieces, preparatory to putting it together again in a newer and more fashionable style.

And a great deal was done before Mrs. Dawson was called away to give the finishing touches to the late dinner the Rector liked and looked forward to, little knowing what extra trouble and expense it entailed on his patient, long-suffering wife.

He was a good man at bottom, but dreamy and visionary and somewhat indolent, especially where money matters were concerned.

Mrs. Dawson managed everything, and as she was too unselfish to let him know the struggle she had—which seemed to grow harder every day as the six olive branches grew up and required more to make both ends of their slender income meet—he was rather in the dark as to the true state of affairs, accepted all things as a matter of course, and actually revelled in the nice, tasty dinners she provided, quite unconscious that his five sons and one daughter, who took their tea at the same hour in the dingy morning and schoolroom, very often had to be content with a great hunch of dry bread and small quantity of treacle, with a similar supply of watery tea.

Had he known it he would have been the first to declare that the *régime* must be altered. But he did not know it, and so he ate his game, and his *entrées*, and his poultry, and took the light wines provided for him in silence, and enjoyed them, and was grateful for them, and altogether was easy-going and happy, and never by any chance paid a visit to the school-room after two in the day.

Had he gone there during the week that followed the finding of the muslin gown he might have been rather astonished, for every evening the long table was pushed aside, the two or three squares of carpet taken up from the polished floor, and Dick, seating himself at the broken-down piano, would thump away heartily at the "Blue Danube," "The Adieu," "Manola," and one or two other antique waltzes, while Maggie would practise with her brothers the last new thing in steps.

Dick, who was considered an authority on such matters—no one member of the Dawson family knew why—declared she must rehearse every evening when he heard she was going to a dance.

"What's this finery for?" he had asked, when he first saw his sister occupied with the filmy Indian muslin.

"For me to wear," responded Miss Dawson, with dignity.

"My! won't you be cold these chilly days? You ought to have made that six months ago. You've commenced the wrong end of the year."

"Don't be ridiculous, Dick. Of course it is for evening wear."

"Evening wear! St. Christopher! you don't say so; and who is going to give an entertainment sufficiently magnificent for such gorgeous attire?"

"Mrs. Compton."

"Does she mean to wake up at last?"

"I suppose she does, as she is giving this ball."

"Fancy your going to a ball, Mag—an actual ball! Don't you feel tall and important?"

"No, you goosey!"

"Then you ought to, you ducky! And what is the cause of this outbreak of gaiety on the part of the old lady?"

"Her cousin, Philip Forrester, is staying with her."

"Oh! I see, a London swell, and he must be amused somehow or the other, or die of



enmi, and she means to keep him alive by dancing him."

"You speak as though he were an infant, and she meant to dandle him in her arms!" laughed Gus.

"Oh, dear no! it will be the other way about; he will 'dandle' the girls, if they be pretty, in his arms!" retorted Dick.

"Hardly," expostulated Maggie, in horror; "it wouldn't be proper!"

"Well, it is next door to dandling, when a fellow gets one arm round a girl's waist and the other round her neck, and both hers round his, and carries her about the room. Now, isn't it?"

"No, certainly not!"

"Well, we won't quarrel about it. By-the-way, how is your dancing, Mag? You musn't disgrace us by floundering about like a cow in a cabbage garden at the Hall!"

"She never could disgrace us!" shouted the younger boys, in loud and shrill chorus.

"We won't give her a chance," said Dick, coolly, "she shall have a spin every night."

And so she did; and they all, even Dick the particular, declared she was perfect, light as a feather, graceful as a bird, and that was praise from her brothers—those most unappreciative of all animals in the world.

## CHAPTER II.

MEANWHILE, the object of all this fuss, bustle, and preparation, Philip Forrester, took matters very coolly and quietly.

He had come down to Leigh, not to be fêted and lionised, but to seek repose, quiet, and oblivion, what he had been restlessly and vainly seeking for over a year; forgetfulness of the past, and of a certain lovely face that haunted him persistently, despite his valiant efforts to drive it from mind and memory; to blot out that short sweet episode when Blanche Ferrol—queenly, regal Blanche!—reigned supreme, mistress of his heart and affections.

He could not do it, strive how he would. Again and again before his mind's eye rose the oval face, pure, pale, and colourless, with its ebony-lashed grey eyes, luminous as twin stars, its proud yet beautiful mouth, with arching upper lip and pearly teeth, its classic features, framed in black braids, heavy, lustreless, soft, and wavy.

How could he forget it? He had never, would never see so perfect a woman again, and she was his once—his alone—pledged to become his wife, and he lost her! Jealousy and mistrust did their worst on his side, and pride and wounded love on hers.

She could not tolerate that he should suspect her of even a passing fancy for another man, when she was his promised wife. It was an insult to her honour, her purity, her fine sense of delicacy; much less could she permit him to accuse her of such a thing. It was an offence not easily forgiven by such a woman, and he, hot-tempered and suspicious, did not trouble to investigate what she haughtily refused to explain, and thus these two, once so much to each other, parted. They did not drift slowly asunder, but one wild wave of passion divided the intermingled current of their lives, sent them singly down the stream.

"Like ships upon the ocean,

That lose each other in a storm at night;

And in the sunlit morn, with gentle motion

The two sail out of sight

So hearts that touch each other, and together

Fare side by side through life a little space,

Again are parted by the stress of weather,

Alone to journey on apace."

With smiling faces and aching hearts, for how many serene faces are mere masks, that shroud and veil the agony of the mind, the anguished throbs of a torn and lacerated heart, whose every beat is torture, and the only remedy for which is death—grim, ghastly death—who comes to some poor mortals in the guise of a welcome angel to release them from pains, troubles, remorse, regrets too

heavy to bear, to whom they open their arms, longing to clasp the grisly form to an aching breast, and find, at last, peace and rest.

Leigh was pretty and rural, a regular English village, and the young man often lounged through its one really respectable street, with the thirteenth-century church at the top, noting with somewhat languid interest the peculiarities of the place:—

The forge, where the three great rough smiths, regular sons of Vulcan, shod the numerous horses brought from far and near to them, or beat the red-hot bars of iron with huge hammers till the sparks flew about in all directions, and the air was full of the sonorous clang of iron against iron.

The almshouses, built in the reign of Elizabeth, quaint, grey, time and weather-worn, in the gardens of which rambled or reclined, according to fancy and inclination, dried-up old gaffers, and wizened, pippin-faced gamblers, who matched the building admirably.

The only public-house the place boasted was a galleried, gable-ended, dusky old building, much frequented by the neighbouring rustics, who divided their time about equally between it and the "stores," a ramshackle kind of a hut, where everything was huddled together promiscuously, and almost anything could be purchased, from a whole pig to a pennyworth of pins, and where candles, figs, almonds, soap, glue, cheese, brooms, saucepans, fibre mats, sugar, tea, lard, cottons, needles, jams, pickles, tin-tacks, calico, apples, cakes, sweets, worsteds, and a heterogeneous collection of other things were crammed pell-mell into the window to tempt passers-by.

And the post-office, which he often patronised for stamps, a white-washed cottage with green porch overhung with honeysuckle and late roses, at the back of which Chanticleer and his dames strutted about with conscious pride in their superiority over the ducks disporting themselves in a large pan of dirty water, and the black and pink piglets wallowed and grunted, and chased each other with savage playfulness.

It was all rural, charming, old-fashioned, and he enjoyed in a mild sort of way, lounging on the soft moss-grown banks, studded with autumn wild flowers, gazing at the woodlands ablaze with ruddy tints, strolling where the nuts hung in great, ripe, brown clusters, hard and tasteful; leaning over gates watching the kine standing knee-deep in the lush grasses lazily chewing the cud, their soft, sleepy eyes half shut, and the partridges and pheasants stretching their long necks, and whisking their long tails amid the glistening stubble.

After all it was delightful doing nothing; just idling through the lovely autumn days, bright with the "Indian summer," and the haze of subdued golden sunshine, that cast tawny lights on fern, and bracken, and grass, the atmosphere holding the yellow beams, increasing the tawny glow, glowing on the thatch of the wheat ricks, and the red tiles of the farm outhouses till they seemed to smoulder in the glow. To the faded Londoner the bright mornings, the misty, shadowy afternoons, and the fresh, crisp evenings, with just a suspicion, a hint of frost about them, were delicious. He renewed some of his youth and strength as he strolled over the dew-wet grass, or tramped through a field of mangolds after the partridges, every step bracing and hardening his frame, restoring his mind to a more even balance, and making the past year, and all its sad events, recede a little into a dimmer recess of his mind.

"Rather a bore this dance at the Hall to-night," he said on the afternoon of the day fixed for it, as he and his friend, Guy Stanton, turned back through the stubble, on their homeward way, after slaughtering some twelve brace of birds; "don't you think so?"

"No, hardly," returned the younger man, with a gay, ringing laugh, full of genuine merriment. "I am not such a used-up, bland

fellow as you are, and I confess I am looking forward to some pleasure this evening."

"Say rather fun," growled Forrester. "It may be fun to watch the rustic maidens of these parts rush and charge through a quadrille, or flounder and flop in their endeavours to waltz. But pleasure—my dear fellow, just reflect for an instant—is it any pleasure to sail round the room with an oak tree in your arms, or a feather bed with a ton of iron attached to it hanging on to you?"

"I've never tried either, so I can't possibly say, and I don't at all see why all the girls about here must necessarily be oak trees or heavy weights."

"It is so far from town," expostulated the other, "and they can't have much practice in a dull village of this kind."

"Possibly not. Still some women naturally dance well without any training; probably we shall meet some here."

"Not very likely."

"Possibly, not probable. Still I'll bet you a bottle of champagne before the evening is out you'll be making desperate love in a dim corner to some pretty rustic, all eyes, exclamations, and admiration for you, and everything else!"

"Pooh!" exclaimed Forrester, contemptuously. "I'm done with all that sort of thing."

"Thoroughly used up, eh? Well, you were a terrible fellow once upon a time. A regular Jack among the jills!"

"In my salad days. I shall never flirt again," and, almost unconsciously, he sighed heavily.

"Never seek your heaven 'in woman's eyes'?" jested Guy, who knew all the details of his friend's love affair, and often tried to rally him out of the melancholy that possessed him, with, however, scant success.

Forrester was one of those who feel deeply, yet give little outward sign of the inward agony; his feelings seemed numbed, dead, and he believed himself utterly incapable of again experiencing any of the pain or pleasure the tender passion brings in its train, so he shook his head, and said,—

"No."

"Well, I don't believe you. You'll gaze into azure depths, or violet orbs, or brown eyes, and sigh as furiously as you ever have. See if you don't, before this night is over too;" and with another gay laugh Stanton entered the Hall, followed by Philip, and going to their room; after a hurried dinner, proceeded to don evening dress.

The fine old Hall was a blaze of light from garret to basement. In the drawing and reception rooms the perfume of flowers and exotics hung heavy and sweet in the air, and the music, dispensed by a military band from the neighbouring garrison town, was lively enough to have made a monk from La Trappe dance, speak, and make merry. The girls were fair, the dresses bright and pretty, and altogether the ancestral portraits of dead and bygone Comptons had a gay scene to look down on, and chase the frown from their gloomy brows; only, somehow, the frowns did not go from the pictured faces any more than they did from that of Philip Forrester's, as he leant against the door watching the throng surging to and fro through the handsome, well-lighted rooms.

"You don't seem to be enjoying yourself, old man?" laughed Guy, as he passed with a pretty grass widow, to whom he had been devoting himself in a very reckless fashion, hanging on to his arm.

"No, I am not," returned the "old man," shortly. "Nothing to enjoy."

"Oh! treason, Mr. Forrester," smiled the widow, archly, giving him a playful tap with a fan of gigantic dimensions. "Why, where are your eyes?"

"Well, at present, to the best of my belief, they are in my head."

"Then why don't you use them?"

"I have been doing so for the last hour or two—exercising them vigorously."

"But not usefully."

"That depends."

"I mean not to your own satisfaction."

"Hardly."

"You have seen nothing startling in the way of beauty—nothing that pleases you?"

"Nothing save your fair self," he responded, with somewhat overstrained gallantry.

"Oh, pooh! that's a mere empty compliment. You don't mean it a bit, I can see, by the look on your face. You said it because you thought I was fishing," and Mrs. Montgomery pouted her full crimson lips in a very taking fashion, only it was lost on him—a regular strewing of pearls before swine, for he was not looking at her.

"The water is too shallow; don't try to fish there. Here is an inexhaustible well, a fathomless pool, where you may fish, and fish, and fish, and still find sport," and Guy struck his breast with his gloved hand, and looked straight down into the bold dark eyes of the woman on his arm.

"That sounds encouraging. I must try the spot."

"Do. Let me lead you to a quiet, secluded spot, where you can have every opportunity of testing the truth of my assertion."

"And of punishing you if I find you have made a false and delusive statement?"

"Certainly. Only I hope the punishment will take the form of kisses," whispered Guy, audaciously.

"Ah! *coquin!*" murmured Mrs. Montgomery, with a killing glance and a shrug of her gleaming white shoulders that somehow or other suggested visions of pearl-powder and bismuth, so dazzlingly and unnaturally fair were they. "Your coolness knows no bounds."

"None where a pretty woman is concerned," he agreed.

"Adieu for the present. Oh! knight of the useful countenance, when we meet again in this crowd I trust you will wear a brighter expression. Until we do make better use of your eyes. There is something worth looking at in the feminine way over there in the blue ante-room."

And with this parting piece of advice the grass widow glided away with Stanton to find a cool, dark corner in the conservatory, where she might conveniently and quietly listen to that broad, and almost risky, flattery which was as the very wine of life to the vain, frivolous, empty-pated little woman, and without which, in large and almost daily doses, she would have moped, and sickened, and shrivelled up as her prototypes, the butterflies, do when the sunbeams lose their warmth, and the first keen touch of frost in the air tells that autumn has arrived.

### CHAPTER III.

For a while Forrester stood where they left him, idly scanning the passers-by; and then, impelled by some motive, he could not tell what, unless it was one of curiosity, he sauntered over to the ante-room, and, pushing aside the heavy velvet portieres, went in.

An exclamation of surprise half rose to his lips, and was crushed back as his eyes fell on a lovely girl, sitting on a blue fauteuil, talking to a young man.

The blue velvet formed an admirable background to the dainty chestnut-tressed head and transparent rose-tinted face.

He thought he had never seen anything so beautiful, and fairylike, and fragile. In truth, few would have recognised little Maggie Dawson in the elegant and lovely girl who graced Mrs. Compton's rooms.

The soft muslin fell in light folds around the slight figure, leaving the white arms and throat bare. Her only ornaments were a few white roses, and the effect was charming—more so as she was quite unconscious of her good looks, and perfectly natural in her manners and gestures.

"Wonder who she is?" he muttered, watching her furtively, and envying the bucolic-looking youth at her side, who, from his ocky face and general heaviness of aspect,

might reasonably be supposed to have a soul appreciative only of beeves, and hogs, and agricultural produce.

Yet here he was side by side with out and away the fairest piece of womanhood in the rooms. It was too bad. Forrester felt personally aggrieved and insulted.

How could such a lout appreciate such a fairy? Why, he couldn't, of course; and equally, of course, it was Forrester's duty to relieve her of the society of such a fellow, which he quickly did by getting introduced, and taking possession of her himself, much to the porky one's disgust and chagrin.

"Are you fond of dancing?" he asked, in the pauses of a waltz, which he acknowledged to himself was one of the most delightful he had ever had, as far as a good partner was concerned.

"Oh, yes, very!" lifting the pansy eyes, and letting him have his first good look at them.

"By Jove, how lovely!" he murmured, noting the exquisite colouring and the rim of long, inky lashes that darkened and softened the starry orbs.

"You don't get very much of it down here, I suppose?" he went on, aloud.

"No, not much."

"You can count the dances on your fingers easily?"

"Yes, easily."

"What sort of entertainments are most favoured by the good folks of Leigh?"

"Tea-parties and sewing bees."

"Lively arrangements, I should say. You like dances best?"

"Much the best—that is to say, this one. I have only been to children's parties before."

"I see; you are not out yet."

"No-o," she faltered, not quite understanding what he meant.

"You will want some more after this?"

"Yes; but I can always waltz with Dick; he is a beautiful dancer."

"And who is Dick?" with a queer little ring in his tones.

"My eldest brother."

"Oh! Have you many brothers?"

"Five."

"And you practice dancing with them all. No wonder you do it so well."

"All but Robbie. He is too small," she explained.

And then, somehow or other, he drew the whole account of her short life from her, and knew all about mother and father, and Dick, George, Robbie, and the twins, not even omitting Max, the fluffy-coated otter-hound, and Rogue the raven, and Jenny the old nurse, promoted to the honourable post of cook, slush, and butler since Rob, the baby, had been out of arms, and the finances growing narrower.

"Getting on better, aren't you?" inquired Guy, passing him later on, with a quizzical glance.

"Yes, thanks!" returned his friend, coolly.

"Nice girl, isn't she?" nodding in the direction of Maggie, whom Philip had given up to another eager aspirant.

"More than nice—quite charming!"

"Chestnut her tresses, and violet her eyes, beaming with innocence, loving and babylike; dressed in a faded and old-fashioned gown,

She with her prattle so sweet, captivated you.

Gladly forgetting the belles of the town,

Love in a cottage you fancy now awaits you.

Sighing no longer for fortune and fame,

Life seems to dance with renewed elasticity;

Rich your reward if you only can claim—

Wealth from the lips of your Little Simplicity,"

quoted Guy, with a very wicked smile.

"Take care, Philip; baby eyes are dangerous, and baby lips. You will lose your heart."

"I haven't one to lose."

"Then a leaf from the artichoke that does duty within you for one. You sad fellow, you owe me a bottle of cham."

"You are quite welcome to a dozen."

"Indeed! Is a waltz with 'Little Simplicity' worth so much?"

"Quite worth it. She dances divinely. Try her, Guy, and see if I am not speaking the truth."

"I will, dear boy. The man must be a queer animal who would want much persuasion to make the acquaintance of such an angel;" and he went off to seek an introduction, but found it useless, as Maggie's card was full.

Others in the room had marked the rare loveliness of face and form. She was literally besieged by would-be partners, and could have danced every dance twice over. However she was not much elated at her triumphs. There was only one she felt she would care to meet again, care to dance with often, and that one was Philip Forrester. With a few soft words, a few softer glances, he had won "Little Simplicity's" heart. He was unconscious of it, utterly and entirely, or he might have reflected before he got Mrs. Compton to take him to call at the Rectory and establish him as *ami de la maison*.

He did not reflect; how few men do in such matters, thereby wrecking and ruining the lives of many women, who, a little unselfish thought would spare hours and hours of dreary misery, and he got into the habit of dropping in at the old-fashioned house every day at some time or other—morning, afternoon, or evening.

He found it wonderfully pleasant, sitting under the oaks and having tea with Maggie and the children, sky-blue and thick bread-and-butter, when the weather was fine, or nutting in the dusky recesses of the woods, or sitting round the fire in the schoolroom on wet days, watching her eyes fill with eager wonder and her lips part, as he told her stories and anecdotes of that gay, fashionable world to which he belonged, and which was a sealed book to her.

She was so innocent and fresh, so full of exotic charm and unartificial grace, that she insensibly wound herself into his affections in a way he did not quite understand then, though he did well later on—interested him, and unconsciously flattered his vanity—that vanity which had been so sorely wounded, so roughly handled by another woman. She knew nothing of worldly ways or arts, of concealing what she felt; and she always sprang forward to meet him, looking so delightfully glad to see him when he came that he grew to look forward to her greetings, to wish for them, to long for them, to feel his life would be emptier than it had been during the past year without her. The fair, innocent girl he thought had stepped into the place in his heart Blanche Ferrol left vacant. He deluded himself into the belief that he had forgotten the regal woman, with her queenly, polished manners, and thorough knowledge of the world at last; and that this soft, sweet, modest little country blossom would satisfy the longings and aspirations of his proud spirit. It was a fresh sensation for him—the unconcealed admiration of a young and lovely girl—and he enjoyed it despite the laughing warnings given by Guy Stanton.

"Take care, beware; Little Simplicity will do you more damage than a finished coquette—work dreadful havoc with those big, violet eyes."

"Poor little woman," muttered Philip, with unconscious tenderness, "she will never do any one, save her own sweet self, damage of that sort, I'm sure."

"Ah! old man, hard hit, I see! I shouldn't wonder if Little Simplicity blossoms into Mrs. Philip Forrester one of these days."

"I might do worse," returned Forrester, quickly.

"I quite agree with you," laughed his friend.

"Yes, I might do worse," he repeated, dreamily, as later on in the day he sauntered over to the Rectory, and saw her nipping off the yellow and white chrysanthemums, and throwing them into a basket Robbie held, the



sunrays lingering among her bright tresses lovingly, throwing deeper shadows into the pearly eyes. "I might do worse. She is very charming, and well-dressed would make quite a sensation in my world. I shall never forget Blanche quite. Still, why should I wear the willow for her? Better to steep my mind in oblivion as far as she is concerned, and stretch out my hand to grasp the happiness that lies within my reach."

"Is it you?"

The lovely, tremulous colour rose to Maggie's face as she turned and found him at her side. The scissors were dropped, the thick gloves torn off, and both small hands were stretched out to him, while a glad smile hovered round the rosy lips, and a gleam of light shone in the soft eyes.

It was pleasant to receive such a welcome, and he held the hands longer than was absolutely necessary, and pressed them warmly, if the truth must be told.

"Are you glad to see me?" he asked, looking down at her.

"Very glad. Why, I did not see you all yesterday."

"Quite an age!" he smiled.

"It seemed so to me," she acknowledged, naively.

"You missed me?"

"Yes; I have so few friends," she said, plaintively. "I can't afford to spare one for—"

"Even a day?" he interrupted.

"Not for even a day," she repeated. "Not at least those I like, those that are near and dear."

There she stopped suddenly, crimsoning from brow to throat.

"Were you going to say 'dear' to you?" he asked, coolly.

"No," she faltered.

"Maggie, that is a fib, I fear," bending till he could look into her downcast face. "You were going to say that; at least I hope you were, for I should like to think you don't—hate me."

"You know I don't do that," giving him a reproachful glance.

"And if I were to go away for a long time would you be sorry? Would you miss me very much?"

"I should, indeed," she answered, wistfully, the rounded cheeks paling at the mere idea of her Sir Galahad's departure.

"Perhaps I shall have to go soon," he went on, watching her.

"Soon!" she echoed—a sob she hardly tried to check rising to her lips, that quivered pitifully.

"Yes, soon, perhaps."

"And—then I shall not see you any longer? When you go it will be a parting—for ever."

"There will be no parting for us unless you wish that it shall be so!" he cried, passionately.

"No—how—why?" she gasped, startled at this sudden display of passion and vehemence.

"Only death can sever those who truly love when they are man and wife, and that is what I want you to be to me. Will you be that?" throwing his arms round her. "Will you be my wife?"

For a whole moment she remained silent, gazing into his face, full of wonder and doubt; but as their eyes met her doubts fled, as mountain mists before the beams of the morning sun; their spirits met, their souls rushed together, in the touch of lip upon lip. The strong power of love had overcome reluctance and timidity on one side, doubt on the other.

They were drawn together by an irresistible something, intangible, yet powerful; and she stood within the shelter of his encircling arms, trembling at the happiness which was hers—a happiness which she had not dared to dream of an hour before; and he felt some of his lost youth come back at the touch of that soft

mouth, fluttering like the petals of a wind-blown, crimson rose.

"Have you no answer to give me?" he whispered, in a tone that thrilled her through with a pleasure so exquisite it was almost pain. "Not even a little 'yes'?"

Maggie lifted her eyes at his question, a tide of crimson sweeping over the fair face as she met his impassioned gaze. She linked her arms round his throat for an instant, murmuring "yes," and then hid her blushing face on his shoulder.

"Sweetheart," kissing the silky, chestnut locks, "the fault will not be mine if your path through life for the future be not strewn with roses, bright with sunbeams, rich in love. I want your affection; I stand in sore need of it. You can banish the dark clouds that have surrounded me for some time past. Make me happy, give me that joy I thought I had lost for ever! Will you be all in all to me? Give me undivided allegiance, the whole treasure of your young heart? Nothing less will satisfy me."

"You have it all," she answered, softly; "undivided. You are first with me, and will be so always."

"And you will be happy, you think, as my wife?"

"Oh, yes! so happy," she sighed, "so happy. I never dreamt of such a thing. And you?" she added, quickly, lifting the pearly eyes to his, a wistful light lurking in their purple depths. "Will you always really care for such a simple country girl as I am, entirely different from the beautiful women you have often told me of?"

"Can you doubt it?" he asked, his lips close to the shell-like ear, his hot breath fanning the fair cheek. "It is your innocence and simplicity which charms me; it is because you are different from the false-hearted, false-faced women of that world that I love you—and I shall love you all my life."

"Ah, do, do!" she cried, with sudden impetuosity; "do now that you have told me you will. How should I live without it? I could not—I should only exist."

"Have no fear, darling!" he answered confidently; "it is yours now and always; nothing can alter that."

"I hope, I trust not. You are so much to me."

"You think you will be happy—content with me? You will not regret your old home and feel sorrowful?"

"Ah, no! To be with you could never make me sorrowful. I shall be quite content and have no regrets. I only fear that you may tire of me."

His ear was greedy of her words, and his lips longing for her kisses; and he closed her mouth with a long caress. And when he lifted his tender, shy face sank once more on to his breast, and the little hands clasped his throat lovingly. For that embrace, that long, passionate, clinging kiss, was a revelation to her—the opening of a new world, of which she, in her childlike innocence, had never dreamt of; and she leant against his breast, silent and palpitating, the quick, restless throbs of her heart perceptible to him as he held her strained closely to him.

It was a moment of bliss for both—a rare, beautiful moment—full of eloquent silence, great delight, in which the subtle feelings of their inner natures spoke—a silence never to be forgotten, so full was it of all sweetness; and yet it passed like the flash of summer lightning, the sweep of a bird's wing, as everything fair in life does, and became but a memory to both, a memory sad and painful to one—sad with that pain of remembering what one would fain forget, because it brings back recollections of so much sweetness, lost for ever, and therefore better forgotten, buried with the dead past, that nothing can bring from its deep grave.

"You must not doubt me."

His voice broke the enchanted silence, and she lifted her head.

"Promise," he said, imperiously.

"I will try not to—only—"

"Only what?"

"My happiness seems too great to last. I shall always dread losing it—dread that you may change."

"Nonsense! you must not indulge such fancies. I forbid it. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear."

"And do you heed?"

"Yes."

"And will you obey?"

"Yes."

"That is right. And now that we have settled matters between ourselves I must go and see the Rector."

"I wonder what father will say?" she murmured, doubtfully.

"I hope he won't refuse to give me this," kissing the small hand he held tenderly; "to make me your lord and master, master of these sweet lips," pressing his mouth to hers again; just as Robbie, who had been sent to the house with the basket of chrysanthemums, appeared at the top of the tree-shaded walk where the lovers stood, and the sight that met his astonished eyes made him run back to the schoolroom, and tell Gus that "The strange man was tiffin' Maggie, and huggin' her close like a big bear," which information fetched the boys, and they all trooped out to see this wonderful sight, and effectually put an end to the *little-d-dittle*.

"I will seek your father now, at once," said Philip, after an interchange of civilities with his brothers-in-law-elect, whom he hardly blessed for appearing just then.

"Will you?—so soon?" she murmured.

"Yes. Why not?"

"I—I—don't know."

"I don't suppose you do," he responded, promptly. "I want to know my fate at once—to know whether I am to be happy or miserable, so come along."

"You—you don't want me to come to father with you, do you?" she asked, timidly. "No," he answered, with a light laugh; "I only want you to come as far as the house. I will face the Rector myself. Little coward!" he added, tenderly, "couldn't you do that much for me? And you say you love me."

A flush stole over her cheeks at his words, her eyes filled with tears, and the long lashes drooped, showing his words had hurt the sensitive heart.

"Dearest, I did not mean to pain you," he whispered.

"I know," she said, softly. "Only, believe me, I would do anything for you, and—I do love you."

"I believe, Maggie," he hastened to say, for he saw by the quivering of her lips how greatly she was moved. "Come," and together they went up the paths, between the beds of gay flowers, to the old house; and Gus looking after them as they sauntered slowly along assured the others, gravely, that—

"He was quite sure that fellow Forrester was spoons on Maggie, and wanted to marry her; and he hoped the 'gav'nor wouldn't be such a duffer as to let him have her."

#### CHAPTER IV.

MR. DAWSON was far from anxious to part with his treasure, his only daughter. He could have spared one of his boys, but Maggie—that was a different matter.

However, Forrester pleaded hard for his consent, and after a long and serious talk with his wife—who, despite the fact that it nearly broke her heart to even think of parting with her beloved daughter, knew what great advantages would accrue from such a match—he gave a reluctant consent, and Philip was received as a future son-in-law.

That winter passed as none other had ever done to Maggie. An enchanted world opened for her. She had never been so happy, she would never be so happy again, as in those brief days when the clouds were grey, and the air chill, the rivers and ponds frozen, and the earth covered with a mantle of snow.

What mattered leaden skies, and snow-covered earth, the cold and death around?

The roses of life were all bloom for her—perfumy, strong, sweet. She was rich in love, tenderly cared for, lived in a paradise fall of sunshine, blossoms, and happiness. Her life was glorified, was crowded with aspirations, feelings, joys, which she had never before experienced, and which gave her rare delight.

Philip was a model lover, and Little Simplicity had nothing to complain of. He was devoted, kind, attentive, and lavished presents on her to such an extent that she hardly knew what to do with them. There was no more any necessity for her to appear in her mother's refurbished old gowns, to wear black shoes, when white were the right thing, nor to use ugly fans that destroyed the harmony of her appearance. No; her lover did not let her want for anything, and loaded her with jewellery, and nick-nacks, and pretty dresses and luxuries of which she had not even dreamed. And the light in the pansy eyes grew brighter, and the flush on the soft cheek deeper, and never had she looked so lovely!

The old, hard life of toil and striving and contriving was left behind, to a great extent, and she and her dear ones tasted the sweets and pleasures that money can procure.

"Do you feel inclined to leave home for a month or six weeks?" asked her intended, one bright March morning, entering the schoolroom, where he generally found her on his arrival at the Rectory, with an open letter in his hand.

"I—I—don't—know?" she faltered, thinking it might separate her from him. "It would depend upon—"

"What?" he demanded, as she hesitated.

"Upon two—or three—things."

"What are they?"

"Where should I have to go, and would you come with me?"

"I can answer both these questions satisfactorily," he replied. "My sister Maud wants to make your acquaintance, and has invited you down to Hensfield, and I should go with you."

"Then I do feel inclined. There is nothing I should like better, or enjoy more."

"That is settled then?"

"Oh; but Robbie, and—and—the boys."

"Well. What of them?"

"They would miss me so much, and there would be no one to look after baby," calling her youngest brother by his pet name.

"They will have to 'miss' you altogether someday, you know," he said, with a significance that brought the blood to her cheek.

"Yes, I—know," she faltered.

"Well, they had better begin at once, and I dare say Mrs. Dawson can manage Robbie for awhile."

"She is so busy," objected the dutiful daughter.

"Well, we must find her and speak to her about it."

And they did, and the unselfish woman at once said, "go" to her child, for she guessed intuitively what a disappointment not doing so would be to her. She assured Maggie that she would be able to look after and manage Robbie, though in, truth, her duties as a minister's wife left her scant leisure. Her mother's meetings, her sewing bees, her schools, her visits to the poor, and a hundred other calls on her time left her hardly a moment to herself, and she knew the sole charge of her youngest would be an onerous addition to her busy life; still she at once cheerfully accepted it.

When Maggie married it was an understood thing that Forrester would give them such help as would enable them to keep another servant as part-nurse to the little fellow, and part assistant to Mrs. Dawson, but until he held the position of son-in-law such substantial assistance could not be accepted from him, as there is often in this life—too often, alas!—a slip 'twixt cup and lip, which

shatters and destroys carefully laid plans. Maggie was quite ready to go, having heaps of pretty things, presents from Philip, and in less than a week she set off with him for Hensfield.

The journey was delightful to her, she had been about so little, and, moreover, taken with him it became supreme bliss. She was naively pleased with everything, and as he drove up the avenue of elms leading to his sister's place, in their dashing phaeton, which had met them at the station, and listened to her artless prattling, and looked into the pansy depths of her innocent eyes, so full of adoration for him, he felt a great calm joy steal over him a sense of restfulness which he had not experienced since parting with Blanche Ferrol.

Afternoon tea was going on in the drawing-room. When they arrived it was full of people—a gay, chattering throng of idle butterflies, who sipped souchong, and daintily munched thin bread-and-butter, while they talked scandal, told racy stories, and highly flavoured on *dits*, and tore their friends and enemies, reputations to pieces with charming impartiality.

"And this is my little sister that is to be?" said Maud Hensfield, kissing the fair, child-like face.

"Yes. My future wife," said the brother.

"And a very charming one she will make. She's quite lovely, actually seraphic!" declared their hostess, in an audible aside to her guests in general.

"By Jove! that she is," muttered a plunger, with yellow moustaches, and big staring blue eyes.

"A regular clipper," murmured a sporting baronet, who stood next him.

"Never saw anything so pawfect," agreed a collegian, who being in his salad days admired everything and anything that men older than himself praised.

"She has the face of an angel," chimed in a clergyman, a fashionable parson, whose Belgravian parishioners boasted no small share of good looks amongst them.

"Hope you are not jealous?" laughed Maud.

"Not in the least," returned Philip, though, in truth, he did feel somewhat annoyed at such outspoken praise of his promised bride—outspoken, yet meant to be veiled, because he saw she was covered with blushes, and confusion as much from the praise of the men as from the stony stares of envy, hatred, and malice with which the feminine portion of the community regarded her; and *their* looks were black indeed, for they scented mischief, and knew that Little Simplicity, with her fresh untouched beauty, would be a powerful rival, and take some of the lustre from their world-worn and slightly artificial charms.

"Let me find you a chair, and give you a cup of tea?" suggested Mrs. Hensfield, who saw the gathering frown on her brother's brow.

"Thanks," murmured Maggie, too much overcome by the novelty of her position, and the stir she had caused, to be capable of saying more.

"Here is a nice, quiet corner, where you can see and yet not be seen, unless you like."

"Thanks," she repeated, sinking into the low chair by the corner jutting back from the mantelpiece, thankful to obtain some shelter from the volley of criticising looks.

After a time she summoned courage to look around, finding that everyone else was chatting away vigorously, and had ceased to stare at her—that is to say, openly—for one or two of the men forgot their good breeding, and covertly stared hard.

It was a charming room—different from anything she had ever seen. Cosy, comfortable, slightly æsthetic, yet graceful and luxurious.

Heavy, gold-threaded curtains draped the windows, the *portieres* were of the same material, and the couches and chairs upholstered similarly. An ebony grand stood in one corner, a crimson plush easily sup-

porting a mirror, beautifully painted, in another; brackets holding rare china adorned the walls, little tables were dotted about crowded with costly nick-nacks, Venetian glass, Dresden china, Benares brass-work, ivory carvings, antiques of all descriptions and kinds, and modern productions, both beautiful and fragile; masses of lovely flowers, hot-house blooms, were thrust with careless grace into vases and jars; tall palms stood in odd nooks, and delicate ferns in every available space and corner, and as a background, fairy-like, green, refreshing to the eye, was the conservatory, where the fountain threw up silvery jets into the air, which splashed down into the marble basin, where the gold fish disported themselves with a musical murmur, and baskets of rare plants hung suspended by ornamental chains, and queer, creeping things grew, and clung, and climbed.

"How are you getting on, little one?" asked her lover, making his way to her side after some time.

"Very well, thank you," she answered, shyly.

"Shall I get you some more tea?"

"No, thanks."

"Quite certain?"

"Quite."

"Then let me come and sit beside you, and tell you who the celebrities are. That is to say if you care to know. Do you?"

"Oh, yes, very much," she answered, readily, for she wanted to keep him at her side, though she did not much care about the celebrities.

"Who shall I begin with?"

"Anyone you like."

"Haven't you any curiosity about anyone present?"

"No, I don't think I have."

"Shows you're not mixed in the world much. What do you think of that stout lady in brown silk?"

"Not much. She looks commonplace."

"She does. Yet she is none other than Miss Finch, the celebrated authoress."

"Indeed!" said Maggie, studying her attentively. "I thought such a clever woman would look very different."

"So did I when I was as young as you are. I know better now—know that celebrities look very much like other people. That young fellow talking to her is a great admirer of Irving, and bearing a resemblance to him gets himself up to look like him, and recites bits out of Shakespeare. The man with the bald head and spectacles is Herr Shrikken, the great German violinist, and the lady in blue silk at his side is the last new professional beauty, Miss Fredericks, and so on, and so on he went talking to her, trying to amuse and interest her, until Maud came and carried her off to her pretty bedroom, all blue satin and creamy lace, to dress for dinner, and told him to go and make himself presentable.

The room appeared too lovely to Maggie to be used as anything less than a boudoir. All the luxury and display overcame her, as did the attentions of a French maid whom Mrs. Hensfield sent to attend on her, and whose services she would far rather have dispensed with, but who, it must be acknowledged, dressed the abundant chestnut tresses to the greatest advantage, and gave several finishing touches, such as only a Parisian can, to the simple blue diaphanous gown Maggie selected from her stock, which added greatly to the loveliness of the young girl.

"*Mam'selle est gentille comme une ange*," murmured the maid, when she finished, and stood surveying the result of her pains, and so thought many of the men when the young girl appeared in the drawing-room; and they cast sundry envious glances at Philip as he led her into dinner, with an air of proprietorship, and devoted himself to her during the evening, to the exclusion of all others.



## CHAPTER V.

LIFE was very bright at Henchfield. Day after day glided by, full of pleasure and enjoyment. Every moment was occupied pleasantly.

Maud was a capital hostess, her husband a model host, for he let his guests do just as they pleased, and never objected to the number his wife asked, or the length of their stay; and if she found anyone dull or uninteresting she soon managed to make them understand that they were out of their element under her hospitable roof, and had better "move on," which they invariably did, and were replaced by brighter and more attractive metal.

To Maggie she took a great fancy. "Little Simplicity" charmed her, as none of her fashionable, artificial friends did, and she would not hear of her going away at the end of a month, as both Philip and his intended wished to do, and which if they had done would have saved one of them a lifelong misery.

No, she had a fresh batch of guests coming, and she must show her wild rose, as she called Maggie, to them.

All this flattered her brother, pleased his vanity, which was great, and made him believe himself to be much more in love with her than he really was, and to this fact his eyes were somewhat rudely opened.

One soft, April day, when he had returned from a long walk across the daisy-pied fields, and found them all assembled as usual in the drawing-room, occupied with tea and scandal.

"There is an old friend of yours over there, Phil," whispered his sister, as she handed him some tea.

"Indeed, Who?"

"Go and see. She is sitting near the mirror."

"It is a she, then?"

"Of course. A he would not interest you much."

"No. Where is Maggie?"

"Out driving with Mrs. Pritchard. Have you no curiosity about this old friend?"

"Not the least little bit in the world. She doesn't interest me."

"Yet she used to, once, I believe very much."

"Used she?"

"Yes."

"I daresay a good many women did in my salad days."

"This one was after your salad days."

"Ah!"

Something in his sister's tone and manner made him look round sharply, and his eyes met the magnificent dark orbs of—Blanche Ferrol!

There she sat, lovelier than ever; her dark brunette beauty set off by the rich ruby velvet gown she wore, softened at throat and wrists by creamy, priceless old lace. In truth, it was a regal face of Semitic type. Full red lips, slightly aquiline nose, velvety brown eyes, large, sleepy, sensuous, heavily fringed with jetty lashes, that swept the rounded cheeks, softly tinted, like the side of a sun-ripened peach; a finely moulded chin, set on a throat of ivory whiteness, looking whiter by contrast with the mass of raven hair gathered loosely in a knot at the back of the shapely head, and straying in little vine-like tendrils to the neck.

How beautiful she was!—how rarely beautiful!

It seemed to Forrester that she was fairer than when they had parted, some two years before. There was more depth in her whole expression—more soul in the melting eyes, richer colouring in the cheeks and lips. His hungry eyes devoured the beautiful face that had haunted him almost every hour since they had last met.

Could it be that he had lost her? Could it be that he had no longer the right to sit at her side, to hold her hand, to kiss her lips? Could it be that he was nothing to her, that another

would some day, might even now, have the right to claim those delights he forfeited by his folly, and which he knew now he would give so much, all his earthly goods, to possess! He set his teeth, and breathed hard at the thought.

The strange fascination she had ever had for him deepened in her presence; he could not resist it, and forgetting all else—his plighted word, his girl-bride, his honour, all, he crossed to her side, and held in a long, close pressure the hand she offered him.

"I did not know you were here?" she said, unconstrainedly, her woman's wit enabling her to conceal the emotion she felt at thus being suddenly confronted with the man whom she had—nay, that she *did* love with all the strength of her passionate nature.

"No! Does that mean you would not be here if you had known?" he queried, his dark face flushing.

"I—think—perhaps it does," she returned, with some hesitation.

"Perhaps we are fated to meet?" he whispered in a low tone.

"Do you think so?" she answered carelessly.

"I am sure of it. It is our destiny."

"Have you become a fatalist, Mr. Forrester?" she asked, a tinge of scorn in her clear tones.

"Only on one subject," he returned pointedly. "I felt, I knew, that sooner or later we should meet again—meet, and our lives mingle once more in the stream of daily intercourse."

"Is that your fatalism?" she queried with deeper scorn. "I could easily alter that by leaving here to-morrow, and giving you no clue to my whereabouts."

"You might, yet you will not."

"I think I may."

"No, you will not. You could not," he pleaded softly; "will not wrest my newfound happiness from me. After weary months of despondency, could you be so cruel as to deprive me of the pleasure of your society?"

Her cheek grew deeper rose-colour at his words; she trembled under the warmth and passion of his glance.

"Could you?" he reiterated. "Will you?"

"No," she answered softly. "I will not."

"I knew you would not," and there was a wonderful gladness in his eyes and face as he looked at her—a gladness that boded ill for the future happiness of "Little Simplicity," and the woman at his side, knew she had neither the power nor the inclination to banish him, to send him away from her for ever.

That night Blanche Ferrol did her utmost to enhance her brilliant beauty, and royally lovely she looked as she entered the drawing-room just before dinner, her amber robes sweeping out around her stately figure in graceful folds, diamonds clasping her polished throat, and rounded arms, and flashing amid the dusky tresses, a wonderful light in her soft dark eyes, a tender smile curving the beautiful mouth, and irradiating her whole face.

Forrester involuntarily made a step forward but Maggie was on his arm, and Mrs. Henchfield introduced the sporting baronet to Blanche, and they all went into dinner at once.

Yet though the table, with its load of snowy drapery, and gleaming silver, and perfumy blossoms divided them, Philip found many opportunities of addressing Miss Ferrol, and of looking into her eyes and she, knowing nothing of his engagement, and feeling the old, warm passion stir strongly at her heart, banishing the pride that had kept them apart, returned his ardent glances and soft speeches, and was happy with a happiness she had not known for many a weary month—a joy that was exquisite bliss.

"Perchance he may remember still,

Perchance he may forget,

So many changing currents fill

Two lives that once have met!

I cannot vouch for love of men;  
One only thing I know,  
That still I love as I loved then,  
Long weary years ago."

Miss Ferrol was singing, her clear full tones ringing through the room, and the heart of the man who bent over her with lover-like solicitude, turning the leaves, and looking into her eyes whenever he got the chance, while "Little Simplicity" sat alone in a corner, pretending to look at a book of photographs, and not quite understanding what it all meant, and why her lover was not at her side, instead of hanging over another woman.

She did not understand it, but neither did she understand many of the things passing around her. The talk of the fashionable world was so much jargon to her; the innuendoes, the risky mots, the thinly-veiled double entendres she did not comprehend, and the evil passed by her harmlessly, turned aside by the shield of her innocence.

Neither could she make out why women still young and handsome, her seniors by but a very few years, should redder their cheeks, and blacken their eyes, and pile false hair on to their little heads, and wear gowns, of which Talleyrand would surely have said, "*La robe commence trop tard, et finit trop tôt*," nor why it was necessary to change these said gowns five or six times a day. She had lived such a simple, guileless life that it was all incomprehensible to her, and at first she thought it was the proper thing for Philip to devote himself to the last new-comer, in an absolute fashion, and ignore her, but after a week or two a doubt crept into her innocent heart.

He was changed; she could hardly tell in what way, save that he showed a decided liking for Miss Ferrol's society, for when with her he struggled to be as tender and attentive as of yore, though his heart was not in it, and what chance would a modest guinea hen, in its sober garb of Quaker grey, have against a silver pheasant, gorgons in its brilliant plumage?

Meeting again with Blanche opened his eyes to the true state of affairs, showed him that to her was given all the wild, strong love of his vigorous nature; while for Maggie he only cared as a brother might, for a tender delicate, helpless thing.

He strove against the fatal fascination that was luring him on to dishonour, and he might have succeeded, only Fate was against him, and against the fair young girl, whose loving heart he had won.

She received a telegram one evening, towards the middle of May, saying that Robbie was ill, and summoning her home at once. Rising with trembling limbs she went in search of Philip, to tell him the news. As she passed one of Mrs. Henchfield's frisky young matron friends, the gay butterfly looked up at her with jealousy and spite in her eyes, and hummed,—

"Men were deceivers ever—

One foot on sea, and one on shore,

To one thing constant never."

Maggie wondered, in a dull kind of way, why she looked at her and sang those lines; and then she went on through the drawing-room to the conservatory, but here the sound of voices arrested her steps, and held her spell-bound, for one was Philip's.

"Don't blame me too much," he was saying, pleadingly, and there was a ring in his tone, a tenderness such as she had never heard.

"I could not do that," returned a woman's voice, coldly and firmly. "You have deceived me cruelly."

"I could not help it."

"Could not help it! Pshaw! You need not have concealed the fact of your engagement to that poor child, Maggie Dawson."

"I could not tell you that."

"Why not?" she demanded imperiously.

"Because when I met you again the scales fell from my eyes. I saw clearly—saw that I only cared for her as a plaything, and that

the whole love of my heart, the devotion of my life, were yours."

"That is no excuse for your deceit."

"Ah! do not be so hard, so pitiless. You were, or I fancied you were, kinder, more gentle to me of late, and I longed so madly for your love again, hoped so wildly something might occur to set me free, to leave me at liberty to beg you to be once more my own, my wife, my all."

A faint sob rose to the listener's white lips at this.

"I may have softened towards you, in truth I will not deny that I did so," acknowledged Blanche, with proud humility. "Yet had I known, had I guessed even, at the tie that binds you to another, I should have been colder than stone, and never shown you the regret I felt at having treated you harshly in the past."

"And you did regret it?" he questioned eagerly.

"I did," she said calmly.

"Oh! Heaven. We might have been so much to each other," he groaned; "and now—"

"Now we must part," she said firmly.

"Blanche!"

"There is no other alternative."

"I must lose you now that I know you care for me more than you did of yore?"

"Yes."

"How hard it is. Have you no pity?" he pleaded.

"Do you forget that poor child whose affections you have won?"

"Alas! no. Poor child! But she cannot love as we love."

"You don't know. You cannot judge the depth of feeling in any human heart save your own."

"True. Still I hope and think she does not."

"Yours for me must be very strong when you could pain me as you have done."

"Be merciful, Blanche. Man is weak, and I was sorely tempted."

"You should have resisted temptation."

"I know. I must appear despicable in your eyes. Only try me now. Command anything, no matter how hard; I will obey your orders, to prove my faithfulness."

"Then return to your rightful allegiance. Go to that trusting child, and never look on me again."

"Blanche!"

There was a world of agony in that one word. They stood facing each other in the flower-scented room, all the air heavy with the breath of exotics, love's own perfect hour, 'twixt sunset and moonrise; and the witchery of the hour was on them, the subtle spell, the resistless influence that forced her into his arms, when he stretched them out saying, "One kiss, in pity, before I go;" and made her raise her lips to his. But ere they met in a long clinging kiss the unhappy watcher, with a low cry, turned and fled from the sight she dared not look on—fled to the solitude of her room, to try and still the throbbing of her aching heart, before she sought Mrs. Henchfield to beg her to assist her in returning to the Rectory.

With white face, and tearless eyes, at last she rose, and calming herself sought Maud's room. Her hostess was all sympathy, and did her best to assist her in starting at once. She suggested sending for Philip to escort her to Oakdale, but Maggie so firmly negatived this that she gave in almost at once, for she was not blind to what was going on around, and guessed that there was something more, which had given that stricken look to the girl's face than the telegram, and accounted for her eagerness to get away alone. So she dispatched her own maid with her, assuring her that she would explain everything satisfactorily to her brother.

The wretched hours of that hurried night journey lived in Maggie's memory to the last day of her life. The cold grey light of early dawn was breaking over the hills and woods

when she arrived at the Rectory, and was received with open arms by her mother, and fawned upon joyously by Max.

"My mother and my dog love me, at any rate," she thought, bitterly, adding aloud, "How is Robbie?"

"He is better, dearest. The crisis is past, the danger over."

"I am so glad. May I see him?"

"Yes. Only you mustn't speak."

"Very well."

Silently she looked down at the little wasted face, and a great tear stole from under her lashes, and splashed down on the coverlet; then she turned away, murmuring something about being tired, and sought her room. She had a struggle to go through, a letter to write. Philip must be released, made happy at the expense of her peace and content. The dismissal must come from her. He must never guess that she had learnt his secret.

Helplessly her heart moaned within her, as she thought of how she must pull down, with her own hands, the fairy-like fabric of a happy future, sweep away the dwelling-place she thought her soul would have rested in all the days of her life.

There was no help for it, it must be done. She knew now, only too well, that she had been but a shadow, flitting across his path for awhile, and then vanishing like mist before sunshine for ever.

Steadily she wrote, releasing him from the tie that galled and fretted, and kept him from sharing his life with the woman he really loved. In a few simple words she told him she had mistaken her own feeling, that she found she did not care for him, and asking him to release her without comment or expostulation.

Philip Forrester never knew, never guessed, what it cost his "Little Simplicity" to write that letter, which came as a message from Heaven to him. He thought she would be glad to be rid of him, and dashed off a few hurried kind lines, saying that everything should be as she wished.

"As she wished!" Poor child! when her whole heart moaned helplessly for a crumb, only a crumb, of that love that could never be hers; and then that same evening he sought Blanche Ferrol's side, showed her the letter that set him free, and begged in a few straightforward manly words that she would forgive the past, and be his wife. And she—ah, tremulous, startled out of all her proud self-possession, put both her hands in his murmuring "Yes," crowning his life with a lasting happiness he knew, as he took her to his heart with a tender "My darling!"

The same declining sun that shone on the happy lovers at Henchfield illumined the little room at Oakdale Rectory, where Robbie lay in his sister's arms, quietly sleeping, while she read the hurried lines that released her from her engagement, and broke her heart. She had unconsciously hoped that he would refuse to accept his dismissal. Now all was over.

With one hand she pressed the child's curly head close to her breast, as though to still its agonised throbbing, the other tightly clenched held the letter, the death-warrant of her happy love-dreams. Sitting at the window she watched the evening shadows lengthen; and as she gazed in bitter, tearless, anguish, out over the far-away hill tops, at the red glow of the western sky, she knew that love and earthly hope were lost to her for ever.

[THE END.]

PEOPLE are always talking about originality; but what do they mean? As soon as we are born the world begins to work upon us; and this goes on to the end. And, after all, what can we call our own except energy, strength and will? If I could give an account of all that I owe to great predecessors and contemporaries, there would be but a small balance in my favour.

## HER LOVE—HER LIFE.

—o—

A PRIVATE of dragoons was walking on the Tuileries side of the Rue Rivoli, Paris, one bright summer's day. He possessed a fine figure, and borrowed nothing in appearance from the uniform which he wore. The chevron on his sleeve showed that though but a private, he held the highest post next to a commissioned officer. He was above the ordinary height, straight as an arrow, and with faultless limbs. His features, over which there was a slight cast of sorrow, yet evinced the glow of fine health and the charm of culture and refinement.

His long cavalry sword was raised from the straps which supported it at the belt, and lay in the hollow of the left arm, while the easy, assured gait of the dragoon showed his manly figure to great advantage.

Emile Rocquet was about twenty-four years of age, and was a soldier not from love of the profession, but from necessity. His passion was art, but without the means to properly study he could make but small progress as a painter, or only with difficulty manage to keep from starving by the humble efforts of his pencil as a beginner, where so many admirable and experienced painters could find but occasional purchasers for their works.

He had been left with an invalid sister alone in the world by the death of both their parents, and, after a struggle with ill-fortune, he gathered all his means together to bury at last his sister in the cemetery of Père la Chaise.

Alone in the world, he once more struggled to gain an honest livelihood by his beloved art, but finding himself finally on the verge of starvation, he sought the barracks of the dragoon corps of Paris and enlisted as a volunteer.

With all the natural instincts of a gentleman, and being well educated and manly in all respects in three years he had risen from a private soldier to the highest non-commissioned grade in his company.

Thus much is necessary by way of introducing Emile Rocquet.

As he walked along the Rue Rivoli, and had just reached the arch which leads to the Louvre, a rich equipage drew up to the side walk and stopped close to his side, while some one called to him.

"Monsieur!"

He looked round in surprise; the voice was soft and lady-like. Could it be possible that the lady in the carriage was calling to him? It must be so, for her beautiful eyes were looking intently upon him, and, at some word which he did not overhear, the footman sprang to the door of the vehicle, and, opening it, indicated to Emile Rocquet that he was to enter.

"Did you call me, madame?" he asked, touching his cap as he approached.

"Yes, monsieur. Please to take a seat."

As she said this, it was with such respectful and quiet self-possession that Emile seemed to comply and enter the carriage under a sort of spell. What could it mean? The lady appeared as though she had done nothing at all singular or unusual.

The door was closed, and the vehicle passed rapidly on its way.

In a moment more the lady turned towards him a face which Emile thought to be the most beautiful he had ever beheld. The whole figure was petite and youthful, and the face beaming with health and vivacity.

Emile had an artist's eye for all these characteristics, and gazed upon her with respectful but undisguised admiration. As the lady turned towards him now she started, her face assuming an expression of infinite surprise, as she said, hurriedly,—

"Why, monsieur!"

"Madame?" responded Emile, inquiringly.

"Pardon—oh, pardon me! But you looked so much like an acquaintance of mine that I



summoned you without pausing to reassure myself. What must you think of me, monsieur?"

"Your very natural mistake, madame, has only afforded me exquisite pleasure in meeting with one so very beautiful. Shall I stop the vehicle and get out here?" raising his hand toward the check-string which signalled the driver.

"Pardon," said the lady; "it will appear very strange to my servants. Will you not accompany me home? How perfect is the resemblance!" she continued, as she looked the young soldier in the face.

"The propriety of your suggestion is obvious," replied the dragoon, respectfully. The lady smiled gratefully at the manner in which her suggestion was received.

Emile was entranced by the beauty of the lady at his side, while she talked freely of the various matters suggested by the passing scenes upon the boulevards. She was so sensible, so unpretending and unaffected, that Emile, in spite of a sense of restraint which he could not entirely dismiss, yet was placed at his ease, and found himself in earnest and pleasant conversation with the lovely individual to whom chance had so singularly introduced him.

While they were thus engaged the carriage stopped in the courtyard of a very elegant mansion, near the Arc de Triomphe.

The young dragoon could but offer the lady his hand to aid her to alight, and, in his fascination, accepted without much hesitation her polite invitation to enter the house, though he felt a sense of surprise at his audacity in accepting her proffered hospitality.

He found the house, which was situated in a very elegant and aristocratic neighbourhood of Paris, to be superbly furnished; everything bespoke wealth and refinement. He seemed suddenly to have been transported to fairyland. He heard one of the numerous servants address his fair hostess as Lady Hauteville. She had ordered refreshments to be served in a retiring-room adjoining the salon.

"May I ask the name of one to whom I owe an apology for so singularly introducing myself?" she asked, as they sat down to the table.

"Emile Rocquet," he said, bowing politely. "And your own, madame?" he ventured to ask.

"I am called Lady Hauteville," she replied.

The tables were covered with a light but elegant repast, the choicest wines and most delicate fruits, served in china and silver of fabulous value.

The whole seemed to Emile like a fairy dream, from which he must soon awake. He could scarcely remove his eyes for a moment from the lovely face and form before him, and he fancied now and then that the admiration, which he could not entirely avoid exhibiting, was pleasing to the lady, though her perfect modesty and refinement of manners would have commanded entire respect under any circumstances.

Finally he rose to go, and was cordially invited to come again and renew an acquaintance which had begun under such peculiar auspices. Lady Hauteville gave him her hand cordially as she said,—

"*Au revoir.*"

Emile Rocquet felt like one intoxicated, but it was not the effect of those rare and exquisite wines, which he had barely tasted.

It was the memory of those lovely eyes, those sweet lips, that petite but incomparable form, and above all, the thoughtful kindness and pleasant converse of their owner that so entranced him.

The young dragoon seemed to tread on air, so elated were his feelings.

Of course, Emile at once made all possible inquiries about Lady Hauteville, and soon learned that she was the youthful widow of an old English lord of that name, who had lived for many years in Paris.

He learned that she was the centre of a

proud circle of aristocratic society, and that there were many titled suitors for her hand; that her character bore no shadow of reproach, and that the wealth left her by her late husband was simply immense, and counted by millions.

All these facts only put the beautiful woman farther off from him.

To indulge in the least serious hope as to ever winning even her earnest friendship seemed simply preposterous. What was he, a poor dragoon, that he should dare to lift his eyes to one in her sphere?

It was all an accident that she had ever been led to speak to him even. But yet how kind she had been to invite him to come and see her at his convenience.

"If she had not meant that in earnest she need not have given me her hand," mused Emile Rocquet.

Thinking only of the joy of seeing that lovely face again, and dwelling upon the music of her voice, Emile procured a dress suit, and soon became one of the regular habitués of Lady Hauteville's salon.

Here he met many distinguished people, and many who were open suitors for her ladyship's hand.

He was only, surprised at the never-varying kindness which she extended to himself.

By degrees this kindness on her part became so manifest as to be the subject of remark, and other suitors gradually fell off in their assiduousness.

It was of no use, they thought, when the lady had so evidently made her choice.

"That young soldier—only a private in the Twelfth Dragoons—has won Lady Hauteville's heart. Queer—but there is no accounting for taste," said a disappointed aspirant.

No one wondered more at this than the young dragoon himself. What could so beautiful a woman see in him to attract her? He often thought of this, and asked himself the question; yet it was plain that she favoured him.

He should never dare to ask her; a refusal would kill him. At times he thought the whole affair must be an illusion; it could not be real.

In his leisure hours he had been painting a portrait of Lady Hauteville from memory. It was finished, and he sent it to her for her opinion upon it.

The likeness of the lady was nearly perfect, while the painter had drawn an inspiration from his subject which had endowed him with a genius and power he had never before been able to exhibit. It bore the stamp of the true artist, and would have made a reputation for anyone.

"I had no idea that you were such an artist," said the lady. "How could you remember my face so well?"

"It is never absent from my memory," he replied.

"And I, Emile—I am always thinking of you," she answered, as she drew nearer to him and held out her hand.

He took it tenderly within both of his own, and looked upon it for a moment, and then into her glorious eyes, as he said,—

"Oh, Lady Hauteville, you must not be so kind to me, or else you must be kinder still!"

"I will be whatever you wish, Emile," she continued, as she looked lovingly into his own handsome face.

"My wife?" he whispered.

"Yes," she replied, laying her head upon his breast, while his arms stole tremblingly about her waist.

"And when, dearest?"

"When you please, Emile!"

Afraid that he should lose so precious a jewel he named an early day, and still expected every morning to awake and find it all a glorious dream, until the day when they were united in the solemn shadows of the church of Notre Dame. As the young soldier and his happy bride sat together one evening of their honeymoon, Emile said,—

"You promised to tell me a secret after we were married, dearest."

"And so I will, dear Emile," she replied.

"I will tell you a story."

"There was once a young girl whose father was a very rich merchant of Marseilles, but he became involved in business and lost his fortune in the Mediterranean trade. Her mother sickened and died, and her father came with her to Paris, hoping to retrieve his fortune. But he failed also here, and when she was fifteen years of age he died in a public hospital. The young girl was left alone in a garret, alone in the big city without money and without friends.

"Vice always stands with open arms to embrace the unfortunate, but though cold and hungry, and thinly clad, this young girl preserved her honour. She struggled on from day to day, until, in her suffering, she sometimes thought of the friendly oblivion afforded by the Seine. Such thoughts would come at times. Finally, exhausted with want, she went into the street, gathered her tattered garments about her, and personating the decrepit form of advanced years, she begged from the passers-by. They heeded her not, though she was almost too weak to stand. Food she had not tasted for two days.

"A young man passed; the girl pleaded for a few sous to buy bread. He stopped, searched in his pockets, and found a two-franc piece; and as he gave it to the pretended old woman, he said,—

"Take it, my poor woman. It is the last I have in the world, but I need it less than you."

"A policeman who saw this, came up hastily, and putting his hand upon the girl's shoulder, said,—

"Ah! I have caught you begging, come with me to the lock-up."

"But the young man instantly interposed. He took the hand of the mendicant, and said, quickly,—

"This woman is not begging. I know her."

"But the law forbids begging."

"I tell you I know the woman," continued the young man, and he hastily drew her along out of the policeman's way into the next street, where he left her at the door of an humble restaurant, into which she hastened for food. But the young girl remembered the face of him who had saved her from starvation and prison.

"Emile, you were that young man, and I was the beggar!" said his wife, throwing her arms fondly about his neck.

"The day following that, to me, eventful evening, the old woman who acted as janitress in the building in the garret in which I lived procured me a situation as seamstress in a respectable house. It was that of Lord Hauteville. He saw me often; he was a lonely old man, with no relations living; he fancied that I tended his gouty limbs better than anyone else, and, one day, astonished me by an offer of marriage. He was nearly seventy!

"If you will be my wife," said he, "and take good care of me to the end, I will make you very rich at last, and leave you a good home of your own."

"I had passed through too much severe discipline to wish again to encounter poverty and the cold and heartless world, so I became Lady Hauteville. His lordship lived just two years, a terrible sufferer by the disease which at last proved fatal. Always kind and generous to me, he kept his promise and left me his entire fortune. This is my story, Emile, until a certain day."

"What day?" he asked, kissing her.

"The day I was driving in the Rue Rivoli and saw you. It was three years since that ever-remembered night of beggary and starvation, but I recognised you in an instant. I had never known your name, but it was as natural to stop and ask you to come and sit beside me as it was to breathe. Oh, how dearly I loved you then! But I was Lady

Hauteville, and must be discreet. I resolved that you should visit me. I knew your name and business now, and could make all necessary inquiries."

"Ah, dear one, what *finesse*!" said Emile Rœquest, drawing her closer to his side.

"The conventionalities of society were to be duly observed, for the sake of both."

"Very true."

"Gradually, among my suitors, the favourite one was soon designated."

"To his own marvel," said her husband.

"And then, dear Emile, there was no undue delay," said the beautiful wife, putting up her lips to be kissed. L. M.

## FACETIÆ.

**SPEAK IN A HURRY.**—Customer (in restaurant): "Here, waiter, a steak, well done. I'm in a big hurry." Waiter: "Be you in a hurry?" Customer: "Yes, yes." Waiter: "Den why not take that steak rare 'stead o' well done if you be in a hurry?"

"On, what a pretty fur cloak you have, Mrs. Dumley," said Mrs. Doolittle. "I'm glad you like it, dear." "Yes, indeed I do. I believe I'll get one to do my marketing and such running about in, and keep my sealakin for social visits."

**A RELATIONSHIP THAT PAYS.**—"What relation, Bobby," said Mr. Dobbins to his first-born, "am I to your mother's father?" "He's your fodder." "Nonsense; how can he be that?" "Fodder is what folks live on, ain't it?"

FATHER: "Well, wife, I do not care what you say, I'm always for the under-dog in the fight. Little Boy (who has been silently listening to the argument): "Well, father, suppose it was two cats?"

**NICE YOUNG MAN** (lecturing to a Sunday-school): "Now is there any little boy or little girl who would like to ask any questions? Well, little boy, I see your hand; you needn't snap your fingers. What question would you like to ask?" Small Boy: "How much longer is this jawin' goin' to last?"

"HAVE you seen the lions in Zoological Gardens?" asked a gentleman of a little boy. "Yes, they are spoiled lions." "Spoiled?" "Yes, spoiled. I saw a little girl throw a piece of bread into the cage, and the lion didn't touch it. He wanted cake, I suppose."

"I SEE that a landlord has shot a boarder for joking about the butter," remarked the judge. "That must have been a queer kind of butter," responded the major. "Why?" "That it was not strong enough to resent the insult itself."

**A CRITICAL old bachelor**, who firmly believed that all women have something to say on all subjects, recently asked a female friend: "Well, madam, what do you hold on the question of female suffrage?" To him the lady responded calmly, "Sir, I hold my tongue."

## A YOUTHFUL MARTYR.

The minister had preached a sermon on "Sacrifice," in which he urged the benefit of giving up some cherished pleasure for the cause of religion. Little Tommy had listened thoughtfully, and his mother thought she would find out how deep an impression the sermon had made.

"Don't you think, Tommy," said she, "that you would feel better if you were to give up some cherished delight, some pleasure that you value, in a good cause?"

"Yes," said Tommy; "I think perhaps I might."

"Well," said the mother, greatly gratified at his religious interest—"well, Tommy, and what pleasure do you think you had better give up?"

"I don't know," said Tommy, thoughtfully. "Supposing I should give up going to church?"

WHEN a great ruler dies in a certain country some one calls in his ears three times. One is enough in Yankeeeland. A friend steps reverently to the couch of the deceased and whispers—not necessarily loud—"Let's take a drink." If he makes no reply then he is dead beyond peradventure, and the funeral is proceeded with.

ONE of the brethren who had a habit of meaning out "Oh-h! y-e-s!" at regular intervals during the service was rather broken up on Sunday night. He had just wakened up when the preacher asked the solemn question: "Brother, do you intend to spend eternity in the lower regions?" "O-h! y-e-s!" sang out the devoted brother.

**NO DEMAND FOR IT.**—Mistress: "I do not understand, Bridget, why the *pate de foie gras* was left untouched last night. Did you offer it to the guests?" Bridget: "Yis, mum." Mistress: "What did you say?" Bridget: "Shure, an' Oi axed thim wud they have some Patsy Fogarty, an' they all sed no."

**HE LEFT A GAS BILL.**—"Fangle," remarked Squidrig, "I've just been reading a little Roman history, and I learn that Tiberius at his death left an estate valued at £13,624,000, which Caligula spent in less than twelve months. Now, what I want to know is how Caligula managed to get away with all that money." "That's easy. Tiberius left an unpaid gas bill, which Caligula had to settle."

**ROBERT SMITH**—brother of Sydney, and familiarly called "Bobus"—was a lawyer and an ex-advocate-general, and happened, on one occasion, to be engaged in argument with an excellent physician touching the merits of their respective professions. "You must admit," urged Dr. W., "that your profession does not make angels of men." "No," was the retort, "there you have the best of it; yours certainly gives them the first chance."

## HE KNEW THE STORY.

A business man on the third floor of a building in a certain city bought a ton of coal the other day, and when a boy came up to ask him for the job of elevating the same, he asked the youth to take a chair, and then said in a patronising tone,—

"My boy, you should start right in entering upon the path of life."

"Yes, sir, that's what maw says."

"I was a poor boy—a very poor boy myself at your age."

"Yes, sir, I don't doubt it; you wore ragged clothes, and didn't have half enough to eat."

"Ahem—y-e-s. I felt that I would have to make my own future, and I decided to start out right. In the town where I lived there was a five-story building."

"Yes, sir; and there was offices way up on the top floor, and no lift."

"Just so, my boy."

"And a man who had an office on the top floor bought a ton of coal, and you asked him for the job of backing it up."

"Exactly."

"It was worth half-a-crown, but he offered you a florin, and rather than lose the job you accepted it. The man took a fancy to you, secured you a place in an office, and you are to day rich, respected, and likely to be sent to Parliament. I know the whole story like a book, sir."

"You do! Why, where did your ever hear it?"

"Twenty times over, right in this very street. I tumbled to it after carrying up two tons, and you fellows can't wallop me again!"

"Why, my son, I—"

"It's all right, mister; but my terms are half-a-crown cash or no lugging. Powerful funny thing that all you chaps who have been poor and worked up to riches, want a penniless cub to work for half cash and half toffy!"

The occupant of the office said that he would reserve the job for some boy with a more meek and humble disposition.

A GENTLEMAN who had recently taken up the study of French, and who loses no opportunity of airing the little knowledge he has thus far acquired of that language by translating and pronouncing such French words and phrases as his friends might meet with when he was present, was thus addressed by an acquaintance: "If you only knew as much English as you do French, you might get along splendidly."

"Was it raining very hard when you came in?" asked Bobby of Featherly, who was making an evening call. "Raining?" said Featherly. "Certainly not. The stars were out." "It's funny," continued Bobby, thoughtfully. "Pa had a gentleman here to dinner to-night, and I heard ma say as you came up the steps that it never rains but it pours."

"You have a wide view from these mountains," said an Englishman to a shepherd in a remote district in Aberdeenshire. "That's true," answered the shepherd. "You can see America from here?" said the traveller. "Muukle farrer than that," replied the shepherd. "How can that be?" "When the mist drives off, ye can see the moon."

THE late Mr. Nash, of the Northern Circuit, was once much distressed at the expressed determination of the presiding Judge to sit till he had concluded the whole business, for it was then past six o'clock. "My lord," said he, "the Bar is not made of iron." "No," calmly remarked the Judge—"but there is a good deal of brass about it."

A YOUTHFUL compositor, in setting some "copy," ran across the sentence, "—didn't say a word for an hour," the first word having been cut off in clipping from the paper where it first appeared. He took it to the foreman to supply the word. "What shall I put in there?" he asked, when the foreman read it. "Put in 'he,' of course; you don't suppose 'she' would fit in such a sentence as that, do you?" was the answer.

HE TOOK THE TRICK.—The other day a lady teacher was drilling her younger pupils in forming sentences. She gave the word trumpet. Each member of the class was to form a sentence in which this word occurred. As a starter, she asked an unusually bright little fellow if he could form a sentence with the word trumpet in it. He was eagerly confident in the belief that he could, and the teacher asked him to proceed. This was his sentence:—"I will trump it with a spade." This of course put the school-room in a roar, and the teacher went with the tide.

"I WISH the good old times would come again," said she, "when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean that I want to be poor but there was a middle state," so she was pleased to ramble on, "in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and oh, how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times!) we were used to have a debate of two or three days before, and to weigh the for and against, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon that would be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it."

## A DESIRABLE SON-IN-LAW.

"Rebecca, you shall not speak mit dot Moses Levi vonce more."

"Oh, fadder, yo! preak mine heardt! We vas almost engaged. Vy shall I not speak of him?"

"He haf sheated me. He haf sold me a paste diamond for a shennine sthone."

"Oh, fadder, dot shouldt recommend him to you as a son-in-law. If he can fool a wise man like you, see vat a fortune he haf in der chawelry bizness!"

"Vell, Rebecca, you vas schmarder as I thought. Get married ven you like, I am ankobious to go in bartership mit mine son-in-law."



## SOCIETY.

PRINCE CHRISTIAN will preside at the forty-first anniversary dinner of the German Hospital, to be held at the Freemasons' Tavern on May 6.

THE DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE has presented a handsome breast-pin to a member of a firm of florists, in recognition of his taste and skill in arranging natural flowers which come to her table.

THE GRAND DUKE OF HESSE and his daughter the Princess Irene recently arrived at St. Petersburg, and were received at the railway station (where a guard of honour was drawn up) by the Emperor and the Russian Grand Duke.

It is stated that the Gaekwar of Baroda intends shortly to take another wife, a near relation of her Highness the Maharani.

It may not generally be known that Lord Forester has the privilege of wearing his hat in the Royal presence, a distinction which dates from a grant given to an ancestor in the time of Henry VIII.

THERE has been a petition, thirty-two feet in length, signed by residents and all classes in the lake district, to the Prince of Wales, which shortly will be presented through Lord Bective, asking his Royal Highness to visit their neighbourhood in the approaching season.

KING HUMBERT has contributed £4,000 towards the relief of the sufferers in the Province of Forlì. This handsome contribution, much above the needs of the poor and unemployed, will place the authorities in the position of heading a list for the establishment of an asylum.

THE KING AND QUEEN OF ROMANIA, notwithstanding the deep mourning for the King's father, have decided on giving a series of Court balls, it having been represented to their Majesties that trade would be materially injured were Court seclusion to be of longer duration.

ARRANGEMENTS have been made for holding a bazaar in May, at Windsor, to clear off a debt resting on the local Volunteer corps. The Princess Christian and her two daughters will preside at one of the stalls on the occasion.

A MARRIAGE is arranged between the Hon. Charles Trefusis, eldest son of Lord Clinton, and Lady Jane Grey M'Donnell, sister to the present Earl of Antrim. At Easter a marriage will take place between Mr. Gull, only son of Sir William Gull, Bart., and Annie, second daughter of Lord Justice Lindley.

THE Corinthian Yacht Club ball at Portsmouth was a great success, and the decorations and arrangements were unique and original. The exterior of Sandringham House, where the ball took place, was hung with bunting, while the masthead, port, and starboard lights which were placed above, and on either side of the doorway, gave the appearance of a vessel in motion. The walls of the ball-room were literally covered with nautical paraphernalia. Occupying a place of honour was the Greek ensign, and a new Prince of Wales standard occupied an equally prominent position. Many fathoms of herring nets were utilised in draping the beams, and flags of all nationalities were effectively festooned at various points of vantage. Several handsome model yachts in full sail were placed at intervals round the room, giving the appearance of a race. To enhance the nautical effect ships' lanterns attracted the eye in all directions, the four corners of the room being occupied by an oyster dredge, an anchor, a deep sea long line buoy, and a yacht's life buoy. The ladies' dresses were of the same novel description, being composed principally of the racing colours of the different yachts belonging to the club.

## STATISTICS.

THE death rate from chloroform when given medicinally, is, according to a recent estimate, 1 in 1,600.

A GERMAN authority in a geography for the year 1886 gives the population of the world at 1,435,000,000, speaking 3,064 languages and dialects, and embracing 1,100 forms of religion.

CHOLERA IN SPAIN.—From the commencement of the cholera epidemic in Spain to the last day of July, the number of cases of cholera reported by the Spanish officials was 114,740, of which 33,973 proved fatal.

PATENTS IN ENGLAND.—In the first year of the new Patent Act there were 17,110 applications, not far from three times the number in any previous year, and in the year just past there were 16,101. This falling off of 1,000 may easily be accounted for by the fact that there was a sort of accumulation of inventions at the beginning of 1884 waiting for cheap patents, as is shown by the rush to the patent office in the earlier months of that year.

## GEMS.

ART is based on a strong sentiment of religion—on a profound and mighty earnestness; hence it is so prone to co-operate with religion. Religion is not in want of art; it rests on its own majesty.

THERE are moments when by some strange impulse we contradict our past selves—fatal moments, when a fit of passion, like a lava stream, lays low the work of half our lives.

WORLDLY faces never look so worldly as at a funeral. They have the same effect of grating incongruity as the sound of a coarse voice breaking the solemn silence of night.

THERE is some help for the defects of fortune, for if a man cannot attain to the length of his wishes, he may have his remedy by cutting of them shorter.

SUBMISSION is the only reasoning between a creature and its Maker, and contentment in his will is the best remedy we can apply to misfortune.

PASTIME is a word that never should be used but in a bad sense; it is vile to say that a thing is agreeable because it helps to pass the time away.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

HAM TOAST.—Cut some cold boiled, lean ham into slices; season with the least speck of cayenne and dry mustard; make a cream dressing of a tablespoonful of butter put into a small frying-pan; when hot stir into it a tablespoonful of flour; stir until a smooth paste, when you add by degrees about two-thirds of a cupful of soup stock. Let it boil. Then add the ham and cook five minutes, stirring often. Spread on slices of buttered toast, and serve hot.

CHICKEN CROQUETS.—Take a good-sized chicken and one pound of lean veal. Cook meat and chicken together. Save the liquor; hash up the chicken and veal finely together; season with milk, pepper, salt, parsley, and half a tablespoonful of grated onion. Take a loaf of bread, stale, rub the bread into crumbs until you have equal quantities of crumbs and meat. Place over the fire as much of the liquor as will moisten well the crumbs, into which stir the milk and a piece of butter the size of an egg. When it boils stir in the crumbs until they stick to the spoon. Add the meat, and, when cold, two well-beaten eggs. Form into rolls with your hands, roll them in crumbs, and fry very carefully in hot lard.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

DELUDE not yourself with the notion that you may be untrue and uncertain in trifles, and in important things the contrary; trifles make up existence, and give the observer the measure by which to try us; and the fearful power of habit after a time suffers not the best to ripen into action.

ALWAYS there is seed being sown silently and unseen, and everywhere there come sweet flowers without our foresight or labour. We reap what we sow, but nature has love over and above that justice, and gives us shadow and blossom and fruit that spring from no planting of ours.

WHAT Pope said about "most women" is certainly true about many men, they "have no character at all." It is impossible they should ever quarrel. They cannot. They have nothing to quarrel for. In the course of an hour they will passively agree to a long succession of opinions, no two of which can possibly be held by the same man at the same time. Men who have no vigour or moral principle to grasp or maintain a principle.

PROFLIGACY is selfishness; and the family, and the society, the nation exists only by casting away selfishness, and by obeying law; the law of self-sacrifice, which selfishness tramples under foot, till there has been no more cohesion left between man and man, no more trust, no more fellow-help than between the stags who fight for the hinds; and Heaven help the nation that has brought itself to that!

MUSICAL.—How much lies in that? A musical thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it, namely, the melody that lies hidden in it; the inward harmony of coherence which is its soul, whereby it exists and has a right to be, here in this world. All inmost things we may say are melodious; naturally utter themselves in song. The meaning of song goes deep. Who is there that, in logical words, can express the effect music has on us? A kind of inarticulate, unfathomable speech, which leads us to the edge of the infinite, and lets us for moments gaze into that. All deep things are song. It seems, somehow, the very central essence of us is song; as if all the rest were but wrappings or hulls! The primal element of us; of us, and of all things. Poetry, therefore, we will call musical thought. The poet is he who thinks in this manner. See deep enough, and you see musically; the heart of nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it.

THE FASHION OF TO-DAY.—The modern analytical novel is thus parodied by a humourist: He wondered why she paused in the road as she slowly moved away from him. There are times when—who knows how?—thoughts come into one's mind. Even when the mind is too small to receive them, they will linger near with a mute appeal. Sebastian stood like a dreamy statue on a rainy day as this train of reflection percolated through him. He had seen the lady depart with doubt on her face, with repose in her bearing, with calm in her movements. She had paused; he had seen her pause. Why had she paused? He asked himself the question, because the thought had come into his mind. Without the thought, where would have been the question? What would the question have signified without the antecedent condition of the thought? But there was no time for psychological analysis. He approached the place where the lady had stood. There was a brier in the path which had caught her dress and detained her. This explained all. The riddle was easy as soon as 'twas read. He turned and looked with a westward gaze in the direction of the departed sun. The glinting ray of the purple twilight still shone along the horizon. He withdrew rapidly. If he had not gone he would have been there now.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

AMY.—Light brown.

W. E. R. D.—Thursday, April 8, 1886.

TOMMY.—Quite legal if the indentures are properly drawn up.

FLORENCE W.—If left to her absolutely she can do as she likes with it.

CHIMIE.—We can recommend no hair-dyeing compound that will not act injuriously on the hair and scalp.

A. C. S.—Your liver is probably very much out of order, consult a medical man. 2. Use prepared chalk. 3. Depends upon the constitution.

T. C. H.—Take any employment you can get until you find something congenial to your taste. Personal solicitation will accomplish a great deal.

A. M. B.—The criticism is just, and agrees with our own judgment. The aggressor has reason to regret the untimely election.

PARTY DICK.—Both are a pretty shade of brown, one lighter than the other. 2. Fair writing. Ralph means "pure help." Richard "rich-hearted." Thomas a twin.

G. W.—Bathe with dilute sulphate of zinc. If ineffectual, consult a respectable medical man. 2. We cannot give you a list.

C. H. R.—You will never succeed in any business if you change about so frequently. If you have the least liking for your present situation stick to it.

ALFRED R.—Your ailment is doubtless caused by a torpid liver, and consequently we would advise a consultation with your family physician.

B. M.—Talk the matter over with him, and see if an agreement cannot be made by which the disputed subjects may be assigned to oblivion.

G. M.—The French motto "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*," signifies "Evil to him who evil thinks." It is the motto of the English Order of the Garter.

E. S. W.—It would be advisable to wait until such a legacy is obtained, and then enter the married state perfectly fitted—in a financial way at least—to assume its manifold duties.

EFFIE R.—The best remedy for the cure of frost-bites is long-continued rubbing with the hands or cold flannel, at the same time avoiding the fire or a heated room.

F. C. S.—1. You will probably find all the books you need in the public library. 2. Your handwriting is fair. 3. Learn any penmanship you undertake practically. 4. No. 5. We can make no estimate of practical value.

A. B. H.—You are too young to think of entering into the detective business, which requires peculiar qualifications. Think of some other employment, and go at it with a will.

S. W. R.—1. The plumbing business is regarded as a very profitable one; but you must set upon your own judgment. We would not advise you to give up a good situation for an uncertainty.

M. D. V.—Cherry stain can be removed by using a strong solution of oxalic acid, but you will find it preferable to stain it a darker colour, by using some of the liquids recommended for walnut stains.

LOTTA.—To varnish scraps in a scrap book, boil clear parchment cuttings in water in a glass pipkin till they produce a very clear size. Strain it and keep it for use.

E. E. S.—The trichine will kill the animal if they are allowed to develop sufficiently, but the animal is generally slaughtered before the parasites mature sufficiently to produce death.

K. S.—Propeller wheels are named from their form of the section of a screw, and plough through the water in the same manner that any screw runs in a nut, only that the pitch is greater and the nut is water.

W. E.—Any substance which would render wax pliable in cold weather would render it too soft to preserve its shape in warm weather. Paraffine is sometimes added to wax to toughen it. A small percentage of glycerine might also effect the same result.

R. S.—Diamond drills are made by setting boris or black diamonds in the ends of iron or steel tubes. The tubes are rotated, cutting a solid core, which, by an arrangement of a nipper in the drill, is lifted out with the drill.

E. E. C.—Unless you have some knowledge of a particular trade, we do not see, under the circumstances which you state, how you can expect to succeed. You were unfortunate in losing a place which suited your capacity. But do not despair. You may soon get work again.

L. E. S.—Candace was an Ethiopian queen who invaded Egypt in 22 B.C., but was defeated by Petronius, the Roman governor. In the Acts of the Apostles mention is made of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. It has been asserted that Candace was probably not an individual name, but the title of a succession of female sovereigns.

TWO HANDY.—1. Try the following recipe for making whiffenwhab: Slack half bushel of lime with boiling water, keeping it covered during the process. Strain it, and add a peck of salt, dissolved in warm water; three pounds of ground rice, put in boiling water, and

boil to a thin paste; half pound of powdered Spanish whiting, and a pound of clear glue, dissolved in warm water. Mix these well together, and let stand for several days. Keep in a closed vessel, and when used, put it on in a hot state. 2. Writing done with onion-julose or lemon-julose turns yellow or brown upon exposure to heat.

ALA.—It depends, of course, upon the resistance of the lamps and the way in which they are arranged in the circuit. We think, however, that you could drive four one-handle power lamps with a machine that would supply a four-candle power lamp.

A. C. R.—Your poetry does not exhibit the necessary strength of tone and dexterity of feeling to make it acceptable for publication. Unless you are possessed of a highly poetic fancy—which, unfortunately, is not indicated by the specimen sent—it would not be advisable "to cultivate the muse."

JEMMY W.—1. If you object to visiting the theatre with the gentleman tell him so, and it is not likely that he will insist upon acting as your escort. 2. Scrape horse-radish into a cup of cold sour milk, let it stand twelve hours, strain, and apply two or three times a day, and the freckles will, in all probability, entirely disappear.

C. O. R.—Having discovered the true character of the man, nothing remains to be done but to shun him entirely and school your mind to forget his very existence. This can be very easily done if you choose to exercise the proper amount of will-power and divest your thoughts of all foolish sentimentality.

## BY-AND-BY.

By-and-by, when you are near me,  
And I see your face once more,  
When your smile so sweet can cheer me,  
As they cheered in days of yore,  
Then my heart will warm with pleasure,  
And the past forgotten be,  
While I dwell with one I treasure,  
Who is all the world to me.

By-and-by the sky will brighten,  
This dark night will pass away;  
By-and-by our cares will lighten,  
We shall near the dawn of day,  
When the sun of life shines clearly,  
Where the song-birds sing in glee,  
May we meet and love sincerely,  
And for ever happy be.

By-and-by when you are near me,  
Hours of waiting will be o'er;  
You will come in love to cheer me,  
I shall clasp your hands once more,  
As we dwell in peace together,  
Heart to heart should nearer be;  
Then, for ever and for ever,  
You will be so dear to me.

By-and-by, I shall behold you,  
Then my joy no words can tell,  
Soon my arms will close enfold you,  
While my tale of love I tell,  
By-and-by you will be near me,  
And your heart will be mine own;  
By-and-by your love will cheer me,  
As in days once fondly known.

## C. D. M.

E. M. M.—1. A dark Auburn lock of rather coarse texture. 2. You will have to practice very diligently before your writing can be considered as up to the standard required of book-keepers or copyists. 3. A boy aged seventeen should weigh between 115 and 120 pounds, be five feet two or three inches high, and have a chest measurement of about thirty inches.

W. A. A.—Zinc dust is a commercial article, and is obtained in the manufacture of the metal. Fine crystals of tin can be obtained when water containing zinc dust in suspension is gradually added to a solution of tin chloride. There is no practical chemical process that we can recommend.

E. S. T.—Compressed yeast is obtained by straining the common yeast in beer-weries and distilleries until a moist mass is obtained, which is then placed in hair bags and the rest of the water pressed out until the mass is nearly dry. It is then sewed up into bags for transportation.

E. G. S.—Venus is the brightest of all the planets, and Jupiter is the next brightest. Though Venus approaches the earth so much more closely than her rival in beauty, Jupiter, it has not been found possible to examine her surface, to any useful purpose, on account of her great brightness, the best telescopes of modern times failing to show spots which some of the early observers agreed in describing.

F. W. W.—1. Dry ink-stains may be removed from white cloth by means of a mixture of lemon juice and salt. 2. As a general rule, professional athletes are not long-lived, as the strict training they undergo proves too great a strain upon their vital energies, and induces fatal affections of the heart and nerves. 3. Your penmanship is fully up to the average.

GEORGE.—There are a great many persons who place implicit confidence in phrenology, and are guided by it in the selection of a trade or profession, or for guiding them in business ventures. Many of the principles advanced by phrenologists are now generally acknowledged by scientific men. The fundamental

maxims are as follows: Moral qualities and intellectual faculties are innate; the exercise or manifestation of these faculties and qualities depends upon our organization; the brain is the organ of all our appetites, sentiments and faculties; the brain is composed of as many special organs as there are original and independent appetites, sentiments and faculties in human nature; the form of the head or skull, which in the main corresponds with the shape of the brain, suggests the means of discovering by observation what are any one's primary faculties and qualities.

M. S. T.—The chinchilla is a small animal which is found chiefly in the Andes of Chili and Peru. It is about as large as a squirrel, with a head much like a rabbit's, with large black eyes, and ears nearly as long as the head. It is valued for its fur, which is thick, soft, and grey, and is much used for cloaks, linings, trimmings, and other articles for ladies' and children's wear.

E. R. G.—A very effective lotion for preventing the premature loss of the hair can be made by placing three ounces of pulverised sage in a covered tin vessel, turn a pint of cold water over it and let it steep over the fire ten or fifteen minutes. Strain it off and add a teaspoonful each of pulverised borax and salt. Keep in a tightly-corked bottle and apply night and morning with a sponge or soft cloth by rubbing gently all over the head; then brush lightly.

G. B. S.—There are several reckonings of time. The civil year commences at midnight, December 31. The astronomical year is also reckoned with the civil year. The equinoctial year is reckoned from the vernal equinox. The sidereal year is the time of revolution of the earth in its orbit from a given line between the sun and a fixed star. The perigee is not used in the division of time, only in regard to the moon. Perihelion is the earth's position when nearest the sun.

LIZZIE.—The sentiment of the principal gems may be briefly stated thus: Amethyst, sobriety; beryl, definiteness; carnelian, self-sacrifice; chrysoberyl, cheerfulness; diamond, brilliancy; emerald, purity; garnet, friendship; hyacinth, swiftness; moonstone, sentimentality; opal, inconstancy; peridot, hope; ruby, love; sapphire, fidelity; sardonyx, firmness; topaz, deception; tourmaline, sadness. Some authorities claim that the sapphire symbolises repentance.

W. E. G.—If the lady informs you that she is engaged for the dance in which you desire to act as her partner, ask her to allow you the pleasure of engaging her for some other one. If willing, she will place your name on her programme, and when the time arrives, fulfil the engagement. A gentleman should always engage his partner for the approaching dance before the music strikes up. He should not ask a lady to dance with him too frequently, as he may be excluding others from sharing in the same pleasure. He should always thank her for the pleasure the dance has afforded him, and thus show that the honour of her company is highly appreciated.

E. G. H.—The spirit of conversation requires that the parties shall "meet" or make an effort to meet, on a common ground of tactics and interests, each naturally giving the best entertainment he or she can, and listening with a desire to enter into the moods of the other. The secret of conversing agreeably is to find out what topics have the most interest for one's companion. Therefore, the wiser one's sympathies are in relation to the affairs of the times, in social, literary, artistic and political matters, the easier it is to come into harmony with a new acquaintance. The majority of young ladies, however, deluged in light chit-chat on society matters, or in the current church or theatrical gossip, or the last new novel.

LIZZIE.—Indiscriminate kissing between young ladies and their gentlemen friends should not be encouraged, unless such parties are engaged to be married. Plainly speaking, a man contemplating marriage does not feel comfortable in the thought that the lips of the one he loves have been pressed time and again by several other gentlemen who have been on friendly terms with her at various periods of her existence. He hesitates in offering himself as her husband, and perhaps comes to the conclusion that she is not the proper person with whom to link his fortunes. In other words, a lady should hold her kisses at such a high valuation that no one but her future helpmate can dare to ask for the honour of pressing her lips, and not bestow them upon any male friend for the mere asking.

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